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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN RUSSIA TO-DAY

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN RUSSIA TO-DAY

By MARTHA EDITH ALMEDINGEN, B.A.
A Spiritual Daughter of Mgr. Butkewiecz

LONDON
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1923

To

THE MEMORY OF

CONSTANTINE BUTKEWIECZ

PRIEST

MARTYRED FOR THE CATHOLIC FAITH

HOLY SATURDAY, 1923

Made and Printed in Great Britain

INTRODUCTION

THIS is just one little word about the general aim of this book, which is not meant to be controversial. The Catholics in Russia fully realise from the outset that if anything is to be achieved at all, they must work in the spirit of love. This is the reason why those who have rallied together around our common cause remember that no malice should be borne for the sufferings of the past, no malice for the still greater sufferings of the present and for those looming ahead in the future.

In the past the Catholics in Russia had a Christian Government and a Christian Church to struggle against, and the odds were then not so terrific. In the gigantic struggle of to-day more fearful forces have come into play. The Church in Russia fights not only against political enemies, but against the embodied spirits of darkness. And yet the great truth stands clear before every Russian Catholic that the gates of hell, even of the reddest of hells, cannot prevail against his Church. And this realisation is what helps him to go through everything with a stout heart.

If I were called upon to use an argument with an unconvinced non-Catholic, my strongest shaft

would be: "Go to Russia and see how Catholics live there, and then come back and tell me whether people whose beliefs are not on the rock of truth can stand one tenth of what they endure."

Russia with her tormented and tortured Catholics presents one more proof of the truth of the Catholic Faith. These proofs are surely unnecessary for Catholics, but they are sorely needed by those to whom Christianity is an empty name. And to such the few Russian Catholics would like to send their message of trust and hope, convinced, firm, unshakable through unimaginable horrors; hope in God's mercy, and trust in the faith revealed by his Church.

As I write these lines, a word has reached me from the far North that many of those who shared with me the infinite joys of the inward life in God's Church are in danger of their lives on account of the Faith. I trust my readers will permit me to ask their prayers on their behalf and for the many unknown who suffer yonder for God's truth.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN RUSSIA TO-DAY

CHAPTER I

CATHOLIC LIFE IN RUSSIA OF THE PAST

IT may be well to give my readers a short outline of the conditions of Catholic life in Russia previous to the 1917 Revolution, before proceeding with my personal narrative of Catholicism as it exists in the Russia of to-day.

It is only since the end of Catherine the Great's reign that Roman Catholics have formed an integral part of the Russian Empire, through the incorporation of a part of Poland with Russia. It would be difficult to ascertain what that great Sovereign's exact attitude was towards the Catholic Faith. Documents prove that Catherine II was the only ruler in Europe who showed hospitality to the Jesuits after the suppression of the Order; it is, however, generally surmised that this policy was not due to any feeling of religious tolerance on her part, but to motives of a purely political nature.* Though lenient to a certain

* Many Russian historians, like Karamsin and Soloviev, attribute this policy to Catherine's disapproval of the French anti-religious movement.

extent in religious matters, yet Catherine II changed no ecclesiastical laws, which remained unaltered in all their rigidity throughout her reign.

These laws were first introduced by Peter the Great, who in the course of his Church reforms abolished the Patriarchate, and by admitting a layman into the newly organised ecclesiastical body, the Holy Synod, secularised the Church. According to these laws, every Eastern-Orthodox was obliged to live and die in his religion, the right to change his form of faith being denied him under threat of severest penalties.* Mixed marriages were at first expressly forbidden, then later permitted, but should one of the parties belong to the official Church, then the children were supposed to belong to it too.

When Roman Catholic priests were detected in proselytising, they would be immediately sent to Siberia, or the north of Russia, and the right of preaching and administering the Sacraments would be taken from them by the Government. People who were suspected of having leanings towards Rome were subjected to admonitions and exhortations by their parish priests, and if it were proved

* Usually the penalty incurred was a lifelong Siberian term, all property, movable as well as immovable, being confiscated. During the eighteenth century "concession" to Rome would be sometimes punished with death. The nature of the punishment was to a considerable extent dependent on the social standing of the person involved in the case.

that these measures were not sufficiently drastic, they were compelled to spend a period of penance and seclusion in one of the Orthodox monasteries. The latter measure was especially recommended, as the Holy Synod thought it capable of bringing about salutary results.

After the death of Catherine II came the short reign of her unhappy son, Paul I (1796–1801). He was succeeded by his son, Alexander I (1801–1825), "the Mystic on the throne," as Merejkovsky calls him. It was during Alexander's reign that many thinking Russians first began to feel dissatisfied with the solution of religious problems offered them by the State Church. They found a partial satisfaction for their cravings in spiritualism and freemasonry. There were rumours that the Emperor also was interested in these questions. At his Court anyone attempting to peer into the things of the beyond, however insignificant he or she might be from a social point of view, would find a warm welcome, and, in many cases, financial support.

It was during the reign of this sovereign that many members of the Russian aristocracy began to look towards Rome with serious intentions of becoming better acquainted with her teaching. Sometimes this interest would be merely of an objective nature, but, on the other hand, there were cases when individuals, yearning for knowledge and facts, went a little further. The example of Countess Helen in

Tolstoy's novel " War and Peace " is a true sketch of one of many similar cases. These vague leanings towards Catholicism were then as yet in their embryonic stage. Means of becoming directly acquainted with Catholic truths were very scanty; knowledge of the Catholic Faith being mostly spread by the exiled French clergy at that time driven from their own country by the aftermath of the Revolution.

At first Alexander I did not view this condition of things with an unfavourable eye. Himself but a nominal member of the State Church, he was liberal towards the religious inclinations of others. About the middle of his reign he became still more interested in religious questions, hoping to find in the depths of mysticism some real or imaginary relief from the suffering and despair to which his mind was a continual prey. He would listen with equal sympathy and interest to an Eastern-Orthodox monk, to a Jesuit, to a Baptist preacher, or to a Quaker fanatic. But this tendency to religious liberalism became somewhat modified towards the end of his reign. The Emperor's most intimate friends began to arouse his suspicions with regard to the influence of the Jesuits, to whom the education of so many young Russians was entrusted.* Alexander was gradually brought to believe that the Order was working for the destruc-

* The Jesuits had only one college in St Petersburg, but the majority of Russian aristocrats used to send their sons there.

tion of the Russian Empire in order to subjugate it to the yoke of Rome.

These intrigues against the Jesuits succeeded all the more easily because the Emperor happened at that time to be under the influence of an Orthodox monk, named Photius, whose fanaticism and intolerance in ecclesiastical matters knew no limits. The figure of this monk strangely reminds us in some ways of Rasputin, although Photius was invested with the sacerdotal authority which Rasputin did not possess. The personalities of these two men have everything in common. Alexander I considered Photius to be a messenger from heaven, and consequently acted exactly as he wished.

One of the results of this imperial friendship was the banishing of the Quakers from Russia. Soon afterwards the imperial decree for the expulsion of the Jesuit Order was issued. This decree, or manifesto, as it is generally called, is couched in very quaint phraseology, and the chief offence found in the Jesuit fathers was " perversion of ignorant and tender-minded youth from the light of the Orthodox faith, and love for Holy Russia, to the vicious tenets of Rome." This decree gives us a first indication of how, at that time—and, indeed, until the 1917 Revolution—the idea of a Church or religious body was entirely centred in the national consciousness, and therefore anyone who could turn away from Eastern-Orthodoxy, no matter for what reason, was

considered incapable of "cherishing any more love for Holy Russia." It must, however, be confessed that the charge imputed to the Jesuits was absolutely justified in so far as propaganda was concerned, but their activity in this direction should not be regarded in the crude fashion expressed in the decree of expulsion.

Immediately after the banishment of the Order, their colleges were handed over to secular authorities, their church* given to the Dominican friars, and all the treasures of their libraries passed into the possession of the Imperial Library of St Petersburg.

My limited space forbids me to enter more fully into the details of the life of Russian Catholic converts of that time. The majority of such conversions began to occur towards the end of Alexander's reign. Naturally, they were considered illegal, as the old ecclesiastical laws had not then been repealed, but in some cases the sovereign was dissuaded from persecuting the "culprits," who were thus enabled to escape abroad.

Quaint stories are still told of Russian conversions at that time. In one instance we hear of a great Court lady, who was obliged to make both her profession of faith and her general confession while walking up and down her drawing-room, to all appearances engrossed in a very animated and lively

* St Catherine's on the Nevsky, Petrograd.

discussion with a venerable Abbé, her sons' tutor.* Merejkovsky, in his book on Alexander I, when giving a description of a brilliant Court party, mentions the fact that often such parties afforded the only opportunities for the newly made converts to receive Holy Communion; for the secret police system, always at the disposal of the Holy Synod, was so active that the neophytes had no other possibility of approaching the Sacraments, since their own houses, in most cases, offered no haven of refuge.

The ecclesiastical policy of Alexander's successor, Nicholas I (1825–1855), was a far more rigid one. This Emperor was unrelenting and scrupulous in observing the very letter of the law. Not in vain was he called, even by his contemporaries, " the Iron Sovereign." He was prepared to make no concessions to any one. It should be remembered that he ascended the throne immediately after the terrible mutiny of the Decabrists, and he had ever since lived in an atmosphere of suspicion. The first Polish rebellion, which occurred in 1831, outlined the Emperor's relations to Catholics in later years. The terms " Pole " and " Catholic " became synonymous in his eyes, and in every Pole the Emperor was ready to see a dangerous conspirator against the welfare of the Russian Empire. Naturally, the Government and the people shared the imperial opinion. It is

* Madame Swetchine.

not my place here to enter into the political causes of the above-mentioned rebellion; I should only like to mention here how it affected the general conditions of life for those few Russians who were daring enough to embrace " the Polish religion and imagined that they could remain Russian."*

To cut a long story short, Russia was no place for these converts to live in. They began to escape abroad, but the result of such occurrences was that all Russian subjects were forbidden to leave the country without a special permit, and the latter could be only obtained with the Emperor's sanction.

Nicholas's reign presents to an impartial historian the blackest page of the history of the Catholic Church in Russia. It would not be in harmony with the spirit in which I have tried to write this book, if I were to start recording the facts which have rendered Nicholas's name odious to every Catholic within the Russian dominions, be he Pole, Lithuanian, Lett, or Russian. It will be sufficient to say that by the middle of the nineteenth century it became the greatest crime for any Russian subject outside the Polish borders to belong to the Catholic Faith.

Those Catholics, Poles or Lithuanians by origin, who lived in Russia had scarcely any opportunity of giving proper religious instruction to their children. In some cases these children were able to get a very scanty religious education, mostly in private houses,

* Nicholas's own words.

as any school-system was rendered impossible by the oppressive laws.

It was only in comparatively recent times that adequate provision with regard to religious instruction in schools was made by the Government. During the last few years there were certainly a number of Catholic priests appointed to teach the Catechism at the Government schools, but they were much less numerous than the Lutheran pastors. Their proportion was something like two to three. It should also be noticed that, at the Government schools, the Protestant clergy coming to instruct children of their flocks were hardly ever interfered with by the school authorities, whilst Roman Catholic priests always found themselves under the closest observation of the Government officials. There were certain subjects which it was most difficult for a Catholic priest in Russia to broach, much less to teach, without being accused of disloyalty towards the throne. The Papal Primacy was one of these topics, since the Tzar was the recognised head of the Christian Church in Russia.

Examine the annual catalogues of the Imperial Library in St Petrograd, and you will find few, if any, Catholic books, either in Russian or in any other language; whilst at the same time there is an abundance of ultra-Protestant works, some of them undermining the very divinity of our Lord. These books can be easily procured, and the reading as well

as the spreading of such literature would never incur any censure.

It is needless to say, no practical missionary work could be carried on in such conditions. Priests found guilty of proselytising were immediately sent to Siberia, sometimes into a lifelong exile. Should they happen to be foreigners, they would be instantly ordered to leave the country, with no possibility of ever returning to it again.

Naturally, amidst such difficulties the work of conversion progressed very slowly, to say the least of it. The number of Roman Catholic priests in Russia was barely sufficient to meet the immediate wants of their own flocks, the born Catholics, let alone the converts.

Towards the second half of the nineteenth century we find that the Russian Empire was divided into two Roman Catholic dioceses. The first of these, the big Mohilef diocese, was founded in 1783 during the latter part of Catherine's reign. Its area has remained practically unaltered ever since. It covers the territory to the east of the Duna and the Dnieper. Mohilef, not a big town in itself, lies to the west of the river Dnieper. The Mohilef diocese includes also the Kharkoff, Poltava and Voronej Governments. Even the distant Ural region is a part of it with its towns of Orenburg and Uralsk. The steppes lying to the north and the east of the Caspian Sea also belong to this diocese. Finally, all the imperial

dominions of Asia, the Baltic Provinces and Finland were under the jurisdiction of this same Archbishop of Mohilef.

The other diocese, formed in 1848, during the reign of Nicholas I, is known as the Germano-Armenian diocese of Tiraspol-Saratoff. It was created in order to facilitate the settlement of German colonists in the Don regions. This diocese covers a territory of 508,000 kilometres. It stretches from the shores of the Black Sea to the Caspian. The Imperial Government was inclined to regard this diocese more favourably because it greatly facilitated the settlement of German colonists in those vast untilled lands. Most of these settlers came from Catholic Germany, but there were also a considerable number of Poles and Armenians among them.

This diocese consisted of nearly two hundred parishes, with but two hundred priests to administer the spiritual wants of a Catholic population of 400,000; but these are pre-war figures. The diocese had a weekly periodical which was published in the German language. The last bishops who governed it were: Mgr. Zerr, of Fransfeld, who was elected in 1889 and died in 1900; Mgr. von Ropp, later Archbishop of Mohilef, elected in 1902, and in 1903 transferred to Vilna; and lastly, Mgr. Kessler, who was elected in 1904. Nothing definite is known as to the present condition of this diocese.

It was the unconcealed aim of the Imperial Govern-

ment to create some kind of " Latin Schism " in both of these dioceses. Often all communication with Rome would be temporarily prohibited under some political pretext. These measures tended to make Rome appear a mere phantom.

The most effective means employed by the Government was to leave the Roman Catholic episcopal sees vacant for the longest possible period. As shown above, Mgr. von Ropp was only elected to the Tiraspol-Saratoff see two and a half years after his predecessor's death, and in the Mohilef diocese such occurrences were still more frequent.

The Archbishops of Mohilef lived in closer proximity to the seat of Government, and this rendered their position still more difficult and complicated. A contemporary witness states that out of fourteen Archbishops of this diocese two only were quite exempt from Josephism.*

It goes without saying that in both of these dioceses episcopal elections were invariably carried out by duly authorised officials of the Imperial Ministry of Heterodox Religions. The clergy had little, if any,

* " 'Sur quatorze évêques,' écrit leur successeur actuel après avoir signalé ces maux, 'deux seulement furent à peu près exempts de joséphisme: les choix du ministère impérial étaient souvent perfides, et la résidence près de la cour à Pétrograd augmentait encore la timidité des élus.' " (*Civiltà Cattolica*, 5 Juin, 1915; corrispondenza, p. 475. Quoted by Father d'Herbigny in his *Assurons aux Russes les prêtres catholiques russes*, p. 4, note.)

voice in the matter. When voting for the candidate, a single question was asked by the Government canvassers: Would the proposed prelate carry out the programme laid down by the Government or not? Everything else was secondary to this. It will be unnecessary to point out how much harm was done through these elections.

Mgr. Kluczynsky, who was elected in 1911 and resigned in 1914, was replaced by Mgr. von Ropp only after the Revolution of 1917. This prelate, who was born in 1851, became bishop of the Tiraspol-Saratoff diocese in 1902, and from thence was transferred to Vilna, in 1903, for political reasons. In 1907 he fell under the suspicion of the Tzarist Government and was accused of spreading Polish propaganda. After ten years' captivity, he was released by the Provisional Government in the spring of 1917, only to fall again into prison, this time a Bolshevik one (July 25, 1917). From this last imprisonment he was freed in the spring of 1920, on condition of his immediately returning to Poland.

It is not, therefore, surprising that until the year 1905, when certain favourable changes were inaugurated, there was absolutely no scope for any free Catholic work in Russia. The very words "Catholic propaganda" were understood in one sense only—that of treason to the state; and furthermore, since the Polish troubles in the middle of the nineteenth century, the second Polish rebellion

in 1861, the word " Catholic " in the Russian mind began to mean simply a Pole and nothing else. Religious distinctions became merged in the national.

It is true that other Catholic nations had their clergy in Russia, but these kept to their own flocks, mixing little in Russian society and remaining quite unknown to the masses. " French faith " and " Polish faith " were two different things for the average Russian who had seen something of city life.

Even the work which the Roman Catholic priests carried on among their own flocks was full of risks and perils until the year 1905. They were not safe even when administering to the spiritual wants of their own congregations. I have before me documents relating to a very curious case which happened in the early years of this century, on the eve of the 1905 Bill. This instance throws considerable light on the conditions in which Catholic priests were obliged to labour in Russia.

A young, newly ordained chaplain was sent by his bishop to the town of Perm for the Easter festival. During Holy Week a lady—she turned out to be the Governor-General's wife—came to him to make her confession. Of course, she was a Pole, as there were no Russian Catholics then. For some reason, which the priest never made public, she was refused absolution. A few days later the young chaplain was summoned to the Governor-General's Chancery and questioned as to his reason for " not admitting

the said lady to Holy Communion." He was requested to state his "reasons" for so doing, and threatened with imprisonment if he should be found acting beyond the limits of his authority. At first the priest could not even understand the charge. Then, as he had but few penitents to deal with in that small town, he was able to remember the details of this particular case, but naturally refused to give any answer to the above questions, merely saying that he had no right to do so. Thereupon the Governor-General wrote a formal complaint to the Catholic Archbishop stating "the offence," and declaring it to be "a case of rebellion against the Government's jurisdiction." The Archbishop appealed to the Emperor through a high foreign intermediary, and ultimately the matter was hushed up, to the great indignation of the Governor-General. But the priest in the case was obliged to leave Russia for a time. Had no higher influence been used in his defence, a few years in Siberia would most probably have fallen to his share.

Another instance shows that the secret police service did not hesitate to work even in the confessionals. A Roman Catholic prelate in Petrograd once received a most confidential letter from a highly placed Government official in which the latter was urging him to warn a certain priest in his diocese, who was reported "to be too outspoken on the question of Catholic Supremacy in the con-

fessional, and of discussing there certain topics, which in Russia had best be avoided."

These are but two cases of many which I could instance.

Needless to say, the history of the Catholic Church in Russia of the nineteenth century is the history of the *Latin* Church only. It was primarily the 1905 Bill, and finally the 1917 Revolution, that opened wide doors to the Oriental Rite which is after all the integral property of Catholic Russia.

Those numerous Russian converts who felt a vocation for the religious life had to bid farewell to their country, because to them Russia's doors were closed for ever. Under no conditions whatever could they dream of returning to it; they were compelled to live and die in exile. It was only after the 1905 Bill that certain relaxations began to be made. But of this mention will be made elsewhere.

Now I should like to say a few words about the Graeco-Slavonic or Oriental Rite. It is needless for me to point out why it is Russia's undisputable historical right to have and to hold it.

The word " union " has been very incorrectly translated into the Russian language. It should be " edinenie," instead of which the opponents of the Church Union invented an artificial word, " unia." This word was, and is, abhorred in Russia. The popular name given to it is " the Roman ruse." Even

now the use of this word provokes heated discussions among non-Catholics.

To begin with, the very idea of "Union" is grossly and completely misunderstood. In August, 1921, a learned Russian theologian, Fr. Bytchkoff, gave a public lecture dealing with the subject, and, after having quoted many historical authorities, he pointed out that "the unia" was, and is, a very convenient weapon in the hands of Rome "for perversion of the Eastern-Orthodox," and that the Oriental Rite, as at the present time "practised" in Russia, is nothing but a "ruse" to win people over. "And as soon as they are won over, they will have to accept the Latin Rite, which is absolutely strange to them; but such is the yoke of Rome, etc."*

The word "unia," properly understood, means, as any one acquainted with the subject knows, the return of the Eastern-Orthodox Churches to the communion of the Church Catholic. Consequently, it necessarily means submission of the Eastern-Orthodox Patriarchates to the universal jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, but the Eastern-Orthodox are given every assurance that their liturgical language, as well as their rite with all its peculiarities, will not be taken away from them. On the contrary, they are encouraged to keep it. One of the future tasks of Catholic missionaries in Russia

* Bytchkoff's lecture on "The History of Reunion in Russia" at the Petrograd Theological Institute, July, 1921.

will be to make clear this much misunderstood question.

This outline of Roman Catholic Church life in Russia during the nineteenth century only applies accurately up to the year 1905, after which conditions became slightly ameliorated in spirit, if not actually in letter, by the October Bill. This Bill was supposed to be a "Declaration of Liberty of Conscience," but it was a very one-sided liberty. The real advantages granted by it amounted to very little. The law concerning the form of faith which children were to adopt in case of one of their parents professing the official religion of the realm was not repealed.

The regulation forbidding the Eastern-Orthodox to change their form of faith was cancelled, and people over eighteen years of age were not hindered from adopting any Christian religion which they might prefer, "provided that circumstances were not against such change." This clause rendered the Bill almost ineffective, as in the eyes of ecclesiastical authorities, who, after all, had the last word in the matter, a thousand and one hindrances were always to be found. And then practically, a change of religion was rendered well-nigh impossible by all the formalities which accompanied it. The procedure was as follows: one was obliged to submit one's desire first to the police, next to the local ecclesiastical authorities, and one was compelled also to state all the reasons which prompted one to con-

template so serious a change. In short, the privileges granted by the Bill were purely nominal. True liberty of conscience, in all its fulness, was enjoyed by the Russians for a short period only, from March, 1917, until the October Revolution of the same year.

In practice, a man who chose to become a Protestant was regarded as a person desirous of introducing liberalism into his religious beliefs. He was mildly reproved for so doing, but no one dreamed of depriving him of his national rights, and allowances were always made in his case. On the other hand, any one wishing to exchange Eastern-Orthodoxy for Rome was looked upon as a kind of dangerous madman—" Treason to Russia," etc.

Practically the Bill from which so much had been expected brought scarcely any changes into the life of Catholics in Russia. Catholic priests were regarded with the same suspicion as before and labelled " Polonisers." The few foreign priests who were allowed to live in Russia worked exclusively among their own people,* besides which they were expressly warned before entering the country " not to pervert the young." Hence they were prevented from achieving any great results.

* A French convent of the Ursuline sisters in Petrograd, Austrian friars of the Augustinian Order, etc. These were all supposed not to enter into any relationships with those outside their flocks. As a Russian statesman said once, " the foreign Roman Catholic clergy in Russia were kept ' on sufferance ' and for the use of the Diplomatic Corps."

As to the Polish priests, who, from their knowledge of the Russian language, might be best adapted to work among the Russians, they were so few in number that they were barely sufficient to minister to the wants of their own flocks.

With regard to those Russians who " had found the way and walked in it," it must not be forgotten that in most cases they were unable to do anything for their country, being obliged to live in exile abroad. The best and noblest of them knew that theirs was a dreary time of waiting. But they never lost hope. They realised that Rome as " Rome " neither is, nor ever has been " alien " in the patriot's eyes, and they clung tenaciously to this idea. They understood that the true conception of Universal Rome was blurred through the historical mists which were the inevitable outcome of the three-centuries-old feud between Poland and Russia.

The best Russian Catholics—men like Petchorin, Gagarin, Naryshkin, Pirling, and lastly Soloviev—realised that the innate hostility to all things " Roman and Latin " which seems to be part and parcel of the religious convictions of every average Russian might be removed if the Russians were shown what " Rome " really means, if they could be brought to a true understanding of that great and simple word " Catholicity."

CHAPTER II

THE REVOLUTION OF 1917 AND ITS IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES

IT may seem a paradox, but nevertheless, in spite of its numberless evils, the March Revolution has worked miracles in reviving the religious consciousness of the Russians. The effect of this apparently miraculous revival cannot as yet be fully estimated, and there are many who would flatly deny its very existence, for it seems to be veiled by the shadow of the Red Terror, which threatened to destroy the entire religious life of Russia.

Chaos and disorder, brought about by the events of March, 1917, had inevitably entered into the domain of ecclesiastical legislation, and into the Church's organisation in so far as the latter was connected with the secular authorities. But it would be untrue to assert that the Revolution originally aimed at destroying all religious traditions and principles.

Soon afterwards, in the spring of 1917, a certain order began to emerge out of this chaos, and new decrees with regard to ecclesiastical affairs were issued. It was in May, 1917, that the Provisional Government passed the famous Bill proclaiming universal liberty of conscience.

Two religious bodies in Russia were most affected by this Bill—viz., the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist Community. The Catholic Church now saw the first opportunity for pursuing her religious work unhindered in Russia. The Provisional Government, though avowedly secular, gave no evidence of adopting an aggressive anti-religious policy. The Baptist Community, in order the better to secure its future position, made every possible effort to win the Government to its side. These efforts were, however, without success.

The main body of Orthodox Russians were comparatively little affected by the Bill. The Tzar had nominally represented to them the supreme head of the Church. He fell in March, 1917, but his fall did not lead to any manifestation of anti-religious feeling among the people. On the contrary, the Revolution brought with it a deep sense of religious need, and a vast wave of heart-felt penitence seemed to sweep over the country.

The March Revolution, therefore, cannot be said to present an *anti*-religious aspect, it was rather simply *non*-religious.

The Bill of Liberty of Conscience was passed because the Provisional Government professed to be eager and ready to do away with the wrongs of the old régime. Certainly, extreme intolerance in religious matters was one of the worst features of the Tzar's Government. Still the more lenient measures

inaugurated by the Kerensky Cabinet were not actuated by any special tenderness or consideration for the "alien Churches" of the realm. Yet the openly declared war against all creeds and professions of faith only began with the Bolsheviks, and certainly one cannot attribute its origin to the March Revolution.

The Russians in March, 1917, accepted the Revolution for purely economic reasons, but they did not mean to let it become a destructive factor in their religious life. From facts which have come to light since it appears that the Russian State Church sympathised in the main with the people in this Revolution; but neither people nor Church played any serious part in it, they just silently acquiesced in the inevitable. The really active anti-religious elements in the Government sprang into being much later, almost a year after the October Revolution of 1917.

The State Church herself had certainly undergone radical changes since 1917. Her supreme administrative body, the Holy Synod, ceased to exist in August, 1917, when a convocation of Russian bishops met in Moscow and unanimously decided to revive the Patriarchate in Russia. In short, though the Church had lost her nominal head, the Tzar, through the Revolution, yet she had quickly succeeded in reorganising herself into a strong community completely independent of the secular power in the

country. So much for the Russian Orthodox Church.

Yet what could be said of the so-called "Polish Church," whose position was undoubtedly rendered easier by the political changes?

At the time of the Revolution the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Russia, the Archbishop of Mohilef, Mgr. Edward von Ropp, was in prison, where he had been placed by the order of the Tzar's Government. He was immediately released and enabled to take up work in his vast diocese, which since 1914 had been without a bishop. Yet, unfortunately, Mgr. von Ropp was left in peace for a short time only, as, a few months later, in July, 1917, he fell under suspicion of the Government, and was accused of making political propaganda under the pretext of proselytising. He was imprisoned again, and only released in the spring of 1920 on condition of immediately returning to Poland.

But at the beginning of the Bolsheviks' rule in October, 1917, there seemed no danger to the future welfare of the Catholic Church in Russia. She was at last released from the control of an unfavourably disposed State Church and the ever-felt pressure of an unfriendly Government, and now she saw large vistas open before her. She was able to make good her position amongst the other Christian Churches. She could use her own arguments against their attacks, a thing never dreamt of in the past.

She knew how to negotiate with a Government now strictly impartial in its attitude towards religious matters. Her work lay amongst the people, and she had the splendid consciousness that this work would henceforth be unhindered within the limits of her spiritual sphere. It was her part now to explain with all possible emphasis what the Church really was, which for centuries had been presented to the Russians as at best a narrow Polish national community, or at worst a kind of universal barrack-room with a Jesuit for the officer on duty !

But if on the one side the Revolution opened large fields of work for the Catholic Church, on the other she found herself compelled to combat more enemies than she had encountered for some time past.

Chief among these enemies was the complete liberty of the press for the first time granted in all matters not directly connected with politics. The poison of atheism and unbelief, of course, did not enter into Russian life with the 1917 Revolution. It had existed before, but with the Revolution its scope became enlarged, and it met with no opposition on the part of the Government. The numberless sects, whose efforts at propaganda in the past had been held in check by the ever-vigilant administration of the Orthodox Church, now became formidable adversaries of the Catholic Church, continually opposing her work in the big cities as well as in the villages. And yet, in spite of these and many other

hindrances, it would be scarcely wrong to assume that, had the Provisional Government maintained its position, Catholic work in Russia would have made considerable progress.

With the coming of the Bolsheviks, however, things did not alter at once: even they moved cautiously at first. As lately as the summer of 1918, the Catholic clergy were allowed to hold public processions on Corpus Christi Day in the streets of Petrograd and its suburbs with the Host.* The Red Guards, who then formed the town militia, merely looked on with contempt or with interest, as the case might be, but showed no signs of open hostility. And it was only later that the Government realised what a potent force they were dealing with, and it was then that their venom and hatred were turned against the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

To summarise, the Revolution freed the Russian consciences, made it possible for the Orthodox Church to return to its ancient traditions by restoring the Patriarchate, whilst it released the Catholic Church from the secular jurisdiction of the Imperial Government and gave her large opportunities more directly to approach the people.

* See Chapter VIII.

CHAPTER III

CATHOLIC PARISH LIFE IN RUSSIA AFTER 1917

THE dimensions of the Mohilef diocese were naturally reduced in consequence of the division of the former Russian Empire. Its centre was transferred to Petrograd, where, owing to Mgr. von Ropp's imprisonment, Church affairs were under the supervision of Mgr. Cieplak. In 1920, when Mgr. von Ropp was finally released and obliged to leave Russia, Mgr. Cieplak became the official representative of the Catholic Church in Russia.

There were about nine parishes in Petrograd itself, one in each of its suburbs, and three in Moscow, but in the other towns of Russia the number of parishes did not generally exceed one for each town.

The Petrograd parishes were as follows:

1. The Cathedral on the 1st Rota Ismailovsky, joined to the episcopal palace, was the centre of a large parish situated in the most thickly populated part of the capital. It was administered during the last few years by seven priests only; needless to say this number was quite inadequate to the wants of the parishioners. The Cathedral was joined to the Archbishop's chapel and palace by a big garden, which, like the rest of the church property, was

sequestrated in 1918 and turned into an open air theatre. The work of the Cathedral clergy lay mostly among the Polish and Lithuanian population, though they, too, began to preach sermons in Russian for the benefit of the Russian converts.

2. The next in importance, if not the first, was the parish of St Catherine's on the Nevsky. The activity and influence of this parish were so considerable that I have thought it better to enlarge upon it in a separate chapter. I will, therefore, only give here a short outline of its history.

It was originally built for the Dominican Order at the end of the eighteenth century; then it passed into the hands of the Jesuits, but when the latter were expelled from Russia it was again given over to the Dominicans. It was called the "International Catholic Church of Petrograd," as there were always Polish, French, English, Austrian, Italian and Spanish priests working in this church. Recently it came into the hands of the secular clergy. During the last few years it was administered by eight priests: two of them belonging to the Oriental Rite, and, consequently, Russians; one Lithuanian; one Lett; and the rest Poles. Its last Dean was Mgr. Constantine Butkiewicz, who was martyred for the Faith in March, 1923.*

3. St Stanislas' Church in the Torgovaya, a small church built about the year 1825. This church had

* See Appendix I.

belonged to French friars of the Assumptionist Order, but they left Russia soon after the Revolution of 1917, and it had since been administered by a very able young priest, Father Edward Juniewicz.* There was a considerable number of Russian converts in this parish, and the rector, in spite of his small sacerdotal experience—he was only just ordained when he came to that parish—knew how to meet the many wants of these new children of the Church. He preached in his church in Russian every Sunday evening, organised weekly lectures (like those at St Catherine's)† on Church History and Dogma, etc.

4. The Chapel of the Immaculate Conception in the 14th Line of the Vassili Ostrov, with a small convent of Polish Franciscan sisters, now closed. This was the first Catholic church in Petrograd to suffer from the religious persecution of the Bolsheviks. It was administered by the Very Rev. A. Vasilevsky, D.D.

5. St Boniface's Church, formerly the property of Austrian friars; since the war served by a Polish-German priest, the Rev. Michael Dmovsky, who left for Poland in September, 1922. The church has been closed ever since.

6. The Viborg Cemetery Church, administered

* He was called " the angel priest " by the children of his parish.

† See Chapter IV.

by two Lett fathers. It had a school of Franciscan Tertiary sisters. Closed since the summer of 1922.

7. St Casimir's Church, outside the city walls. This was a small centre of Russo-Catholic life; its parochial work lay amongst the factory hands. It was served during the last few years by a Lett priest, who, though with a poor knowledge of Russian, did all he could for the countless wants of his converts.

8. The Barmaleeva Chapel for Oriental Catholics, administered first by Father Deibner, then by Mgr. Leonid Fiodoroff, Exarch of the Oriental Catholic Churches in Russia.*

9. There was also a church for French Catholics, Notre Dame de France, on the Kovensky, but the work of this parish lay exclusively among the French and the French-speaking Catholics of Petrograd, hence it was considered of very little importance in the life of the city. It was administered by a French Dominican friar, who had no knowledge of Russian and therefore was unable to do any work among Russian Catholics. His church was spared until the last moment by the Bolsheviks, probably for political reasons.†

There was formerly in Petrograd a convent of

* See Chapter V I.

† "The French Church is still open. Some say it is because the Bolsheviks make a distinction between 'Polish-Russian Catholic Faith' and the French Faith." (A letter of one of the St Catherine's fathers to the author, January, 1923.)

French nursing-sisters, Ursuline nuns, but the last of these sisters left Russia in the spring of 1920, together with the aged Père Lagrange, who had been for thirty-five years working among the French inhabitants of Petrograd. Both the convent and its small chapel are now closed, and the convent is turned into a Soviet municipal hospital.

The parochial registers were seized by the Government in the autumn of 1922. It is therefore impossible for me to give any definite figures concerning the Catholic Church life in Petrograd or elsewhere. But the astounding fact remains that, in spite of a very large percentage of the Polish population having been repatriated, yet the Catholic churches in Moscow and Petrograd, as well as in the other towns, were more crowded with worshippers than before the Revolution.*

Moscow possessed before the Revolution three parishes, one of which, St Louis des Français, was closed soon after 1917. The other two, SS Peter and Paul's, and All Saints', as well as the church of the Oriental Rite, were left unmolested until 1922, and their clergy were able to carry on their work under more or less favourable conditions. The extremely limited number of priests was the chief hindrance to Catholic work in Moscow, for in the

* I shall speak elsewhere about the growth and life of the few Oriental Catholic parishes in Moscow, Petrograd and Saratoff.

whole town there were only four priests of the Latin and two of the Oriental Rite. By the winter of 1921–22 this number had increased by one, but even this could do little to make matters easier.

The largest parish in Moscow, that of SS Peter and Paul, was administered by two priests only. One of them, a Lithuanian, could hardly speak any Russian, and therefore was unable to be of any use to Russo-Catholics. The only really Russo-Catholic centre in Moscow, the little parish administered by Father Vladimir Abrikosoff, was not large enough to answer to all the requirements of the numerous converts from Orthodoxy, and therefore the need of a Russian-speaking Catholic priest was very urgent. It was keenly realised by Mgr. Cieplak as well as by Mgr. Leonid Fiodoroff. In the spring of 1922 another young priest was sent to Moscow and appointed vice-rector of SS Peter and Paul's. Among his achievements one should notice his successful efforts to bring together the Catholic youth of Moscow, irrespective of nationality, by means of country excursions, popular lectures, etc. The two Moscow suburban parishes were administered by the Moscow clergy.

In some of the suburbs of Petrograd, as, for instance, Kolpino and Lesnoy, Catholic parish life went on more or less as usual. Lesnoy, indeed, was the only Catholic parish which kept its school. This school was under the management of the Parish

Council, supervised by the rector, and it held about one hundred children. The Kolpino parish, situated at a distance of thirty-five versts from Petrograd, is the last Catholic parish in Soviet Russia which had a public procession on Corpus Christi Day in 1921. Its results were partly lamentable, as the priest was immediately arrested for "counter-revolutionary propaganda," but still one cannot help noticing that it influenced in no considerable degree the inhabitants of the little suburb. Its population consists mainly of factory workers whose knowledge of religious matters is extremely scanty. Furthermore, the place was infested some four years ago by very eloquent Baptist preachers who had persuaded many families to join their sect. Catholics were very few in number, only about one in forty of the whole population. Needless to say, at the beginning there was no parish life to speak of. The youthful rector, who was appointed there soon after the Revolution, immediately set to work, chiefly amongst the young people who were most easily led astray by the Baptists. One of this zealous priest's numerous enterprises was the organisation of a church club, where young people could find wholesome amusement on their free evenings. It was a very poor little room, poor as the parish itself, and the members only numbered about thirty.

Yet trouble was to come. The rector would often receive warnings that his activities were very

unfavourably regarded by the local Soviet, and, finally, when the priest went so far as to venture to ask permission for holding a public procession on Corpus Christi Day, the Soviet, bewildered at such impertinence, granted the necessary permission; but this was the last straw, and on the same evening the young priest found himself in the local prison, from whence he was duly dispatched to Petrograd, and there tried by the High Revolutionary Tribunal. He was found guilty and condemned to one year's imprisonment. Ever since Kolpino church has remained closed by an express order of the local Soviet.

These two Corpus Christi processions, the one at Kolpino in 1921, and the other in Petrograd in 1918, are the only ones which have ever been held in Russia. The general manifestation of religious feelings which was noticeable after the Petrograd procession spoke for itself. In 1921 an attempt was made to secure the authorities' permission, but it was refused on the ground "of the baneful influence of these religious performances on the population." In 1922 this was, of course, not to be thought of.

As for the rest of the Catholic parishes scattered all over the vast Empire, little can be said at present for lack of correct information. It is certain that already in 1920 there were many parishes without clergy, as the various typhoid epidemics had swept

away a great number of priests. Messages with pathetic requests to fill these vacancies would often reach Petrograd, but these requests could be seldom complied with. There were no priests to send.

Petrograd became the centre of diocesan administration, as has been said above. Mgr. Cieplak since the summer of the year 1917 stood at the head of the former Mohilef diocese. The parochial meetings of the Petrograd clergy were held weekly in the episcopal palace. Communication with Moscow and other towns was kept up by means of private messengers and, when the economic conditions of the country became better, by telegram. Parochial committees were organised in Petrograd and Moscow. They were in most cases presided over by the clergy, but members, naturally, belonged to the laity. During the " arrest periods " which in the last few years were not infrequent, all the members of these committees would be invariably arrested, soon to be released again with a warning " to be prudent."

With regard to the economic condition of the Catholic parishes in Russia, it should be said that they were extremely poor, and all the financial burdens lay on the shoulders of the parishioners, few of whom were wealthy themselves. But to do them justice, notwithstanding the scantiness of their own means, they without exception saw to it that " the fathers lacked nothing." I could record

many a touching proof of their devotion, when amid the terrible frosts of December and January they would start from Petrograd and Moscow on a country expedition for the purpose of "provision foraging." In many cases they would not be themselves in actual want, but they wished to see "the fathers well supplied," and for this they would brave all the horrors and uncertainties, nay, almost dangers, of these foraging expeditions.

My record of the parish life would not be complete if I omitted to mention the work carried on by the Petrograd and Moscow branches of St Vincent's Congregation. There were three branches of this Congregation in Petrograd; a Lettish, a Polish and, quite lately, a Russian branch were inaugurated for the Russian converts by the Rev. Paul Chodniewicz. It would be no exaggeration to say that nearly all the sick and dying, irrespective of creed and nationality, of the big hospitals of Petrograd were under the care of the members of this Congregation. This fact was noticed even by the doctors of the hospitals. The Congregation's means were slender, particularly those of the Russian branch, which began its work during the famine years; but the members, most of them young converts, had something to give: this was their time, which for most of them was as precious as money, and their strength, though they were nearly all underfed and sickly from continual privations. And, lastly, they brought to the sick

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their love and care and words of comfort, such as can be said only by those who carry Christ in their hearts. All this they gave ungrudgingly, gave it for love of Christ, and feared neither Government persecutions nor disease. Out of twenty members of the Russian branch, ten caught typhoid and four died of it.

In spite of the continual struggle for daily existence, these women found time for carrying on their work in a most regular way, each visiting the particular hospital allotted to her, and giving in her weekly report at the Thursday meetings held by the President of the Congregation. The work of the St Vincent's girls was tremendously important not only for its material results, which were not always as brilliant as one would wish for, owing to lack of funds. Its real worth lay in the spirit of love and peace and quiet, waiting courage which the members brought into the horrible deserted Petrograd hospitals, which even in the pre-war years presented many a picture of horror and abandonment.

During its short existence of two and a half years the Russian branch of the St Vincent's Congregation had taken up no less than 1,200 cases in various municipal hospitals, and furthermore contributed towards the maintenance of an orphaned child picked up in the street by a member and christened by a father of St Catherine's. She became the adopted daughter of the Congregation. Apart from

the hospital work, the three branches of the Congregation would also take up private cases, always bringing in their share of help and sympathy where material aid was unobtainable.

A word about their inner life. This can hardly be realised by those who live in an atmosphere of absolute safety, but nevertheless it is a fact that every Catholic in Russia knew that he or she was walking on the very brink of imminent peril, a peril real and in no wise imaginary. This peril seemed to lurk in every corner, and already two years ago it became evident that the storm was gathering. All Catholics realised that a moment might come when their faith would be put to a test, a test hard and severe. It was, perhaps, the consciousness of this threatening danger which awoke in them the best feelings a Christian can possess—peace, love, tenderness, gentleness. The eagerness to lead a regular Church life, the joy of taking part in all the ecclesiastical ceremonies, the increased devotion and love towards the blessed Sacrament—these and many others were sure signs that their faith was not dead, but that they loved it and gloried in living up to it.

The regularity with which many of them would attend daily Mass, a practice hitherto little observed in Russia, their attachment to their parochial duties—all these signs showed how greatly they appreciated their Church life. The danger of persecution from a godless Government drew the Catholics of various

nationalities into a closer brotherhood and so remedied what we must admit to have been a defect in the past. The gulf between the Russian and Polish nations was at last bridged by the realisation of their common faith. Poles, Letts, Lithuanians, Russians, all felt themselves for the first time to be simply Catholics.

It would not be quite correct to say that the national problems have completely disappeared. They exist still and will continue to exist, but their acuteness of the past is more modified by the awakened consciousness of the dearness of the faith they hold in common, and the latter has been realised in no small degree by the best Catholics in Russia.

CHAPTER IV

ST CATHERINE'S AS THE CENTRE OF CATHOLIC LIFE IN PETROGRAD

IN my last chapter I had occasion to mention St Catherine's as the centre of Catholic life in Petrograd. And this statement is by no means exaggerated. Its influence was not due to its being the largest church in Petrograd or the most attractive. Neither was it due to its being so conveniently situated in the central part of Petrograd on the Nevsky. It was exclusively due to the fact that, since the Revolution, its administration has been in the hands of clergy who were capable of seeing the innumerable possibilities which since 1917 have entered into the general life in Russia, and who made the most of their opportunities.

It is true that the priests of St Catherine's were but few, and during the last two years their number had grown still smaller, as two of them had been obliged to be repatriated owing to bad health. Yet those few who remained to the end were well able to cope with their task, the difficult task of acquainting the Russians with the true teaching of the Church Catholic. Technically, this work was rendered easier for them, as the greater part of their own flock had gone away from Russia; hence their duties were

now somewhat limited. But, on the other hand, there were innumerable other difficulties.

Yet, in spite of all these difficulties, the evident results of their apostolic zeal could be witnessed almost every Sunday by those who chose to enter St Catherine's Church and hear the numerous professions of faith made there by people of various social positions and nationalities, though most of them were Russians. Sunday after Sunday new names would be read out from the pulpit, names of those who had expressed their desire to be received into "the Truth," "v' Istinou," as they would call it. Their number varied from three to ten every week. And in most cases, with but very few exceptions, these conversions took place at St Catherine's.

The greater number of those people who had recently joined the Catholic Church in Russia belonged, naturally, to the fairly educated classes. It would be a little premature to speak of any as yet noticeable Catholic movement amongst the masses. This will be the task of the future. The Catholic clergy in Russia have not so far penetrated into villages. Consequently, the scope of their work, and particularly the scope of St Catherine's, lay among the more or less cultured town population.

Why did this parish gradually become the very centre of Catholic convert life? It is difficult to answer this question definitely. One can only say that since 1919 this church was really felt to be

truly international, and that among these nationalities " a place in the sun " was given to the Russians, a fact which had had no precedent. It was first and foremost the converts' church. It was here that they received their instruction and were generally prepared for their entry into Catholicism. It actually became the practice of the Catholic priests in other parishes of Petrograd to send people desirous of being placed under instruction to the fathers of St Catherine's.

The priests had no means with which to carry on their work. They had no Catholic manuals of devotion and prayer in the Russian language to give the newly converted. The meagre supply of such literature as they had at their disposal (for instance, the little book of Catholic prayers, " Gospodu pomolimsia " [*Oremus Domino*], which ought to be in the hands of every Russian convert) was distributed at the very beginning, and there were no funds to get a new edition printed. It is true that later, in 1920, a " Russian Catholic Literature Fund " was organised and donations were comparatively liberal, yet, owing to the hostile attitude of the Soviet Government, there was no hope of getting anything printed in Russia, whilst there is now no prospect of receiving such literature either from Austria or Galicia.

Lack of literature and the ever-increasing number of converts who wanted to know the " why " and the " wherefore " led some of the keenest Catholics in

Petrograd to the idea of organising popular lectures in Russian, whose object would be to acquaint the non-Catholics, as well as converts, with the principal truths of the Catholic Faith. This idea was first suggested in 1920 by a Catholic lady of St Catherine's parish. It was laid before the Archbishop, who approved of it heartily, and said that such lectures, if non-controversial, would be the best answer to the attacks of the Eastern-Orthodox and the numerous sectarians. It was decided that these lectures should be free to everyone, irrespective of creed or nationality. Of course, they were primarily meant for non-Catholics. The big hall at St Catherine's, containing the treasures of the Jesuits' libraries, was chosen for this purpose. The front wall of this room was adorned with a magnificent full-length portrait of the Doctor Angelicus. The lectures duly began in the year 1920 with the episcopal sanction. They were meant to be held every Monday evening, and were carried on until the spring of 1923.

The clergy alone could not cope with this difficult task. They were too few in number, and the priests of St Catherine's were too much occupied with their many converts to be able to give their time fully to lecturing. Hence the laity gladly volunteered to help. Two prominent women scholars of Petrograd University, one a Russian and the other a Pole, both of them recent converts, were foremost among these lay-helpers. The lecturers were preferably

Catholics, but sometimes exceptions would be made, and an Orthodox priest or even a layman would occupy the chair. Open discussions were allowed after every lecture. The clergy, in spite of their strenuous work, were always eager and willing to contribute their greatly valued share to these lectures, especially when the subject chosen for discussion belonged to a purely dogmatic sphere and wanted an expert's handling. One of the four monthly lectures was generally given by a priest, and amongst the most welcome of the lecturers was Mgr. Leonid Fiodoroff, the Exarch of the Oriental Catholic Churches in Russia, with his profound knowledge of all questions pertaining to the history of Catholicism in Russia. Next I must mention the Rev. Edward Juniewicz, Rector of St Stanislas, who often "led people to Peter by his clear explanations of Catholic principles," to quote one of his converts, and the Rev. Paul Chodniewicz, who was called the Russian Apostle because of the great numbers received by him personally into the Church. It was mostly after these memorable Monday lectures that people would come to him requiring a more detailed explanation of the subject of the lecture, and he was always ready and willing to answer them. Not infrequently people of real intellectual attainments were received into the Church.

The lectures soon became famous in Petrograd, for they were the only means, outside purely private

instruction, to acquaint people with the Catholic Faith. Their success was immense, and soon the large hall became too small to hold the ever-increasing audience consisting mostly of non-Catholics.

With regard to the subjects chosen for discussion, it should be said that their main object was to acquaint Russian enquirers with the simplest Catholic principles. Also attempts were made to present in a true light many historic figures of the Catholic Church. It should be remembered that Russians in the past were familiar with Popes like John XXII or Alexander VI, and such things as the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, etc. They had little, if any, knowledge at all of men like Leo I or Gregory the Great. The aim of these historical lectures was mainly to give true pictures of the great figures of the Catholic Church and to remove the numerous misconceptions created by the age-long perversion of historic facts. Next came the very important lectures on questions of Catholic dogma. These dealt mostly with the chief points of divergence between East and West, such as the Papal Primacy, the Doctrine of Purgatory, the Immaculate Conception, and the much and sorely disputed question of the " Filioque " clause. The third category of lectures consisted of those on questions of Christian morals, and these were nearly always given by Sister Veronica, a recent Russian convert who had a wonderful gift of speaking beautifully about the simplest things. Many Russians,

whom she won over by her simple exposition of Catholic principles applied to daily life, witnessed to the fact that she appeared to them to be " God's angel in disguise."

All these lectures were of a popular character suited to an audience including people of little education, unable to enter into the intricacies of too refined and subtle language. This was especially the case in the lectures on dogma, in which all technical terminology was carefully avoided to make the dogma as clearly intelligible as possible.

The lectures were discussed everywhere; in the Universities, at Eastern-Orthodox meetings and even the Soviets ! Their most striking and peculiar trait was a complete absence of all polemical elements. This presented a vivid contrast to the lately inaugurated Sunday lectures at the Eastern-Orthodox Theological Institute, which Sunday after Sunday poured bucketfuls of vulgar criticism and unjust accusations on the Church of Rome. At St Catherine's, however, all controversy, even in its mildest and most academical form, was scrupulously avoided by the lecturers as well as by the chairman.

Open discussions were allowed after every lecture, and yet the chairman managed very skilfully to steer clear of the rocks of polemics. People soon began to realise that one had to keep one's controversial tendencies in check when speaking at St Catherine's, and the general spirit of conciliation attracted still

greater numbers of those poor, fagged-out Russians who were so weary of the horrors of the life outside.

In short, these St Catherine's Monday meetings were held with a view of soothing the sore religious feelings of the Petrograd masses. But the St Catherine's people expected in return similar treatment at the hands of those who " were not of them." When lengthy and unjustified abuse was poured on the Catholic Church by some zealous Baptist or Eastern-Orthodox fanatic, the chairman would calmly stem it with the short remark: " This is a house of peace and not of warfare." He would often suggest that the opponent should discuss the matter later privately with a priest.

The meetings usually began at about 7 p.m., and sometimes lasted until midnight. These were happy evenings. Many a Russian convert of to-day was first " aroused from slumber," as one of them has quaintly put it, by the convincing and firm attitude of men and women who stood up, sometimes at the peril of their lives, in the little green pulpit Monday after Monday, and spoke to that vast multitude of the truth as revealed by God in his Church. The Doctor Angelicus above their heads must have been satisfied, indeed, to hear his words and doctrines often ably handled by many to whom his very existence might have been formerly a mere name. The people who spoke there Monday after Monday were

happy, and many of them had received their happiness within those very walls. No wonder that they eagerly wanted to share this happiness with others, and that is why they spoke, for the spirit of service predominated in Russian Catholics during those hard and yet beautifully radiant times.

Oftentimes when the subjects broached were too painful and needed delicate handling, as, for instance, the question of Catholic life in Russia before the Revolution, it was touching to see how the lecturer valiantly made effort after effort to remain within strictly impartial limits, and yet to smooth over the inevitably " touchy points " for many of his non-Catholic hearers. " We are not here to argue in anger, and to discuss things in hatred," was the reply of one of the lecturers to a fanatical Baptist preacher who violently accused him of idolatry after a lecture on transubstantiation. " We are here to speak to you of God who is love and of his Church which is founded on him." And the opponent, ashamed of his own violence, ceased his abuse. It will thus be seen that these Monday lectures were consistently carried on with the dignity and moderation which can only be the prerogatives of those who are conscious of possessing the complete truth. They were organised by people who had themselves gone through periods of religious uncertainty and doubt and, therefore, knew better than many others what love and sympathy can do to help in such cases.

I should like to mention a few subjects discussed at these lectures during the period of 1921–1923.

1. Catholicism and the Anglican Church in connection with the proposed union between the Greek-Orthodox and the Anglican Churches.

2. Pope Gregory the Great and his Eastern policy.

3. Catholicism in Russia after the rupture of 1054.

4. Analogy of ecclesiastical positions of Ireland and Poland.

5. The Vatican Council Decrees explained.

6. The Doctrine of Purgatory as virtually recognised in the Eastern-Orthodox Church.

7. Relations of the Muscovite Tzars to the Holy See during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

8. The Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, etc.

9. The Petrine texts and the Papal Primacy.

10. The "Filioque."

The lecturers were often subjected to most violent abuse. Once a woman lecturer was severely reproved by a sectarian "for having dared to speak in Church, and, worse still, with an uncovered head." When he was told that the hall was not a church, he pointed to the portrait of St Thomas Aquinas, and asked: "If this is no church, what do you mean by having an image of your God hung up here?" On being told who the Doctor Angelicus was, and why his portrait hung there, he immediately walked out of the hall, not wishing to remain any longer in the company of those "who worshipped sinful men and

deified them." But before going out he once more turned to the lecturer and admonished her " to hold her peace for the future, else the wrath of the Lord would fall upon her "; but the incident ended peacefully. Another lecture dealing with the life of St Teresa, also delivered by a woman, was violently interrupted in the middle by a Methodist who accused the Church of Rome of having invented " a second Mother of God, a Teresa, whose proper place is surely hell with its unquenchable fires," and to the latter abode he also consigned the unfortunate lecturer. But such outbreaks were, of course, due to sheer ignorance, and were usually taken in good part, as long as they kept within bounds of decency.

These lectures continued with short intervals, sometimes caused by the Soviet Government interference, until the spring of 1923, when with the arrest of all priests and closing of all Catholic churches throughout the whole country they came to an end. Yet though they had lasted two short years only, one cannot help being struck with the immense extent of their influence. This influence was not confined to Petrograd only, but numbers of people from provincial towns heard about them and were eager to attend them.

Although the organisation of these Monday lectures was the most important achievement of the priests of St Catherine's, their activity did not end there. The clergy also had numerous converts to

deal with, and so the rector, Mgr. Butkewiecz, initiated weekly sermons in Russian to show them the falsehood of the hitherto generally accepted opinion that "the Romish Faith" in Russia was the exclusive property of the Poles. Furthermore, the Rev. Paul Chodniewicz organised a Russian choir composed almost entirely of young girls, all of them converts.

During Lent Russian Catholics had special retreats arranged for them by the priests of St Catherine's who spoke Russian best. The month of May with its beautiful evening devotions also witnessed the Russians' eagerness to partake in the Catholic services, and the Litany of our Lady was chanted in Russian for the first time in 1920. Every Saturday and Wednesday in May the stately white walls of St Catherine's would vibrate to the melodious strains rendered still more beautiful by the music of the Russian language. The same happened in June with its touching services and devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and in October with the rosary devotions. Little by little these practices were adopted more or less in all the Catholic churches of Petrograd and Moscow, but each new practice invariably began at St Catherine's, and the others followed its example.

It was at St Catherine's that the Russian branch of the St Vincent de Paul Society had its beginning and commenced its fruitful work under the direction and supervision of Mgr. Butkewiecz. It was at St

Catherine's, too, that the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament received its first Russian members, and it was here that those members soon formed a separate unit, and began their practice of devotion to the most blessed Sacrament with intercession for Russia.

Let me now say a few words in detail about those priests of St Catherine's at the time when it began its work among the Russians. They were very few, and their number had grown still smaller since the Revolution, when the two most popular priests in Petrograd, Father Razewitch and Father Czaevsky, left for Poland, the former in 1919 and the latter in 1921. The former is now in Poland, but the latter lately died in a hospital in Warsaw. Canon Czaevsky had been the Vicar-General of Petrograd; he was a man of remarkable personality, loved and revered by all who came into touch with him. His departure and subsequent death made a great blank in the life of St Catherine's. The last rector of this wonderful parish, whose influence has stirred in so many Russian hearts the desire to join the Church Universal, was the much lamented Mgr. Butkewiecz.*

The chief organiser of the "Russian Catholic world," and the spiritual father and director of nearly all Russian converts, was the Rev. Paul Chodniewicz, whose extraordinary apostolic zeal was a matter for admiration even among non-Catholics. Then there was another priest, the Rev. J. Vasilevsky, who

* Appendix I.

devoted all his time to organising different works of charity; he came under censure of the Government and was arrested as early as 1921. And I must not forget to mention the young Lett father, the Rev. Boleslav Sloscan, and the old Lithuanian priest, the Rev. Casimir Velitchko, as well as the two Oriental Rite fathers. In conclusion, the main direction of the ever-increasing work of the parish was in the hands of Mgr. Butkewiecz and his coadjutor, the Rev. P. Chodniewicz, and their heroic work was finally crowned by the highest success of all, for one of them has now gained a martyr's crown.

CHAPTER V

PART PLAYED BY THE POLISH CATHOLIC CLERGY IN RUSSIA SINCE 1917

IN the previous chapters I have tried to give a more or less detailed account of Russo-Catholic parish life in Petrograd and Moscow. It will be now my aim to explain the exact rôle played by the Polish clergy in Russia during the years following the Revolution.

It was the general opinion, which still unfortunately prevails among Russians, that these clergy would not or could not undertake any real apostolic work in Russia on account of their nationality being odious to every true Russian. And sometimes instances are given of the intense " chauvinism " of the Polish clergy. The world, however, has just seen the supreme refutation of this allegation in the glorious death of Mgr. Butkewiecz, who preferred to stay and to die in an " alien " country for Christ's sake rather than to save his life by flight to his native land. Further evidence is superabundant now, but it may not be devoid of interest to review the work of the brave Poles who dauntlessly " carried on " among the Russians during the years of the Terror.

What was the attitude of this handful of Catholic Poles towards those who were " not of them "? A

very simple one—that of utter humility and love. On no occasion would any of the few Polish priests remaining in Russia launch out into the field of polemical controversy; even when the temptation to do so went almost beyond human endurance, still these "chauvinists" refrained. And their doctrine was, and is, ever the same: "Christ and him crucified, and his one true Church outside which there is no salvation." Their constant attitude was this: "No yielding, because truth is on our flag; no hostility, because peace is our watchword."

After the Revolution they saw that there were two formidable forces with which they had to contend, namely, the antipathy of the Government and the prejudice of the people, who looked with special suspicion on these Polish priests because of their nationality. Indeed, the people expected little friendliness from these "alien" clergy, and were, in consequence, touched by the unexpected sympathy shown them.

The clergy had a most formidable task before them. The Government they heeded little. Most of them knew that sooner or later the Soviets would find them guilty of "corrupting the people" and of "undermining the basis of the Soviets," and they all looked forward to a future trial. All of them were keenly aware that the semblance of broad religious tolerance of the Soviets at the beginning of their rule was a mere pose to be dropped at the earliest opportunity.

But to live down the age-long hostility and prejudice of the Russian people was a task which required more than mere human strength and forbearance. This hostility had become even more marked since the declaration of Polish independence and the outbreak of war between the two countries, and it seemed well-nigh impossible to grapple with this growing antagonism.

To carry on their work in these trying circumstances the Polish priests of Petrograd refused to be repatriated. Though a few of the provincial rectors were later on withdrawn, these were exceptions mostly due to ill-health and age. The rest remained as Russian citizens, thereby giving up their natural claims to Polish nationality—a heavy personal sacrifice for many, if not for all of them. For already in 1920 the clergy began to feel the first pressure of the Soviets, and the Polish Government was unable to help them because they had sacrificed their nationality.

The heart of their work lay in striving to introduce the principles of true Catholicity to the Russian folk, and, most of all, to bring the message of peace to those who had forgotten, amid the surrounding terrors, what true peace meant. This is illustrated by the following words of a recent convert, Dr. Chumansky, who died in Petrograd in 1921: " It would be no exaggeration to say that the only places of rest in Russia are the few Catholic churches. Only in

them can one find real repose from the continual fighting and struggling outside. Only when talking to these priests does one regain some ray of hope for Russia's future." And the same was the opinion of those few foreigners, particularly the English, who chanced to visit Russia recently. " The only intercession for Russia goes up from the Catholic altars of Petrograd and Moscow," said the late Dr. Farrar, Dean Farrar's son, who came to Russia for the Famine Relief in the winter of 1921, and died of typhoid in Moscow a few weeks after his arrival.

And this handful of Poles, who were regarded with distrust, if not with actual hatred, actually succeeded in breaking down many a barrier which prevented the Russians from obtaining a true conception of Catholicism. " Rome, Rome, and not Poland "— they have brought this truth home at last, if not to everyone, then to the majority of thinking Russians.

The trend of their apostolic work in Russia was clearly outlined by the late Mgr. Butkewiecz after one of the Monday lectures at St Catherine's. His words were occasioned by a violent outbreak of abuse on the part of some non-Catholics, mostly Eastern-Orthodox, who were among the audience.

He said:

" We are in an alien camp in Russia, just as you are at this moment in this room. We try to do our best and give you what you lack, but we cannot work unless we are allowed to do so in the spirit of peace

and charity. On our part we can honestly say that we have done our utmost to get rid of the purely national bitternesses which have caused so many misunderstandings in the past. We are neither Poles, nor Lithuanians, nor Letts, when we deal with you. We are simply Catholics. Why can you not be simply Orthodox, and then we could meet on the ground of purely religious divergencies? This would ease the position. Do you not see that we have fully mastered your language and your ways and your customs, hitherto strange to us, and we have done all this in order to be better equipped to help you, when you may have need of us? We will not come unasked. All we claim in return is sympathy and understanding and peace."

These words are all true. And, on a larger scale, this was also true throughout Russia. Fortunately, the Catholic priests' efforts to reach Russian hearts were not always met with rebuffs and coldness.

Yet still their position was one of double difficulty, for sometimes their relations with their own people, their Polish flocks, became complicated by the fact of their time being necessarily so much occupied with their Russian converts. Occasionally some of the Polish faithful would even bitterly complain that they could get no access to their beloved fathers on this account. The priests' answer to these complaints was ever the same: "Leave Russia; go to Poland; you are able to do it. But do not disturb

us in our duties towards those who need us and who are obliged to stay here. Our first duty lies with these. . . ."

They were compelled to be on their guard against the Government spies just as in the old Tzarist days, and also against the Eastern-Orthodox, among whom were not a few spies always ready to misrepresent what they said. Every Roman Catholic priest, mounting the pulpit, knew that all his words, from beginning to end, should he happen to preach in the Russian language, would be taken down by a Communist shorthand clerk in the congregation, and yet no priest was ever daunted by this fact. And Catholic priests further had to be watchful against the countless attacks of the sectarians who were ever ready to accuse them of attempts to Polonise Russia, and so bring them under suspicion of the Government for treason.

The following is a typical instance of the misunderstandings which sometimes arose even among the Russian converts with regard to the relation of Poland to the Church. A very influential man, a convert from Orthodoxy, who was received into the Church according to the Latin Rite, declared that he would " on no account learn Polish." He was immediately informed that to know Polish was not essential for becoming a Catholic in Russia. It was pointed out to him that the Church into which he had just been received is not the Church of Poland,

or of Russia, but the Church Universal, the Church Catholic. This convert afterwards expressed his astonishment, and openly confessed that he had thought all the Polish priests were chauvinists incessantly and exclusively working for their own country's interests. The priest to whom he was talking merely remarked: " I and the rest of us are Catholics first and foremost. Our nationality is a secondary matter with us. We all work in the interests of the Catholic Faith. Can you not see that if it were otherwise, we would not remain much longer in a country where we have hitherto been ill-treated and suspected, and now are likely to be persecuted for the Faith ?" Words truly prophetic.

As I have tried to show in my first chapter, the Catholic priests' lot in Russia, even before the Revolution, was hardly one to be envied. Now their lives are forfeit, and yet they have all remained at their posts, not attempting to escape to the comparative safety of their own country. Is this what the Russians expected from their old enemies, the Poles, and is this the fruit of their alleged animosity and bitter feeling towards the Russians ?

Who but these same priests kept those committed to their spiritual charge in constant cheerfulness and courage, ever reminding them of the simple, great truth that the gates of hell, even the Red hell, cannot prevail against the Church which has gathered them within her fold ? How well one remembers now

their simple sermons, full of quiet, rock-based courage, during those horror-teeming months of July and August, 1922, when the first rumble of godless thunder began to be heard! Never a word of bitterness, never a single hint of "attacking the Government"; even the Communistic fanatics with their diabolical subterfuges could not accuse them of this. There was nothing but this calm, dignified assurance from the pulpits: "We are in the right, and God is our defence."

And what about the many Russians, weary in body and mind, whose only home was the confessional? What about the many silent sufferers with souls all full of such pain as is perfectly understood by God's ministers only? Who except these quiet brave men could speak so reassuringly, tenderly, soothingly, speak words of pardon, encouragement, and comfort, within the restful quiet of those churches, where God abides and the Red Terror with its denial and hatred of him could not penetrate? Not in vain did the Polish priests give up their national rights for such as these, and stay to work in their midst.

Indeed, the great Russian thinker, Vladimir Soloviev, was right when urging that Catholic work in Russia should be carried on by Russian Catholic clergy. All those to whom the Faith of the Church is dear will agree that this will gradually become a necessity in the future. But whilst assuming that this great work should be entrusted to the hands

of those most likely to gain the confidence of the masses, these priests should nevertheless have behind them the solid training which is to be obtained from the West.

It is remarkable how readily and willingly the born Catholics, most of them Poles and Lithuanians, came forward to help the converts in their difficulties. To those of the Russians who were for some reason or another eager to learn Polish in order, as they said, "to enter more fully into the Church's life," the Poles would invariably reply: "Why should you trouble to do this? Ours is no Polish Church, but Catholic. You Russians will have all that you can possibly want in your own tongue. Your ignorance of ours is no hindrance to your life in the Church."

But even now there seem to be people outside Russia who still think that the Polish priests are intruders and do not enter much into the religious lives of the native Russians. They should remember that the Polish population of Russia is now about one-tenth of what it was before the war. Why, then, did the Polish priests remain after their flocks had gone away? Why did they stay, and why did some of them accept martyrdom at the hands of the Soviet Commissaries? Could it have been because they were Poles? Would they choose Russia to die in if they "hated" her?

Surely it is time that the Polish clergy should be cleared in the eyes of the world once and for all from

the charge of pursuing a narrow nationalism in Russia. Surely it should now be recognised that these same priests who had previously been held in the iron fetters of an implacable Government which saw in them double enemies, enemies by creed and enemies by nationality—that these same priests have now courageously waged a still severer war, the struggle between good and evil, and faced death for their adopted Russian land.

No doubt the future of the Church in Russia lies in the hands of the Russian-born Catholic clergy, but the latter, when they come, will enter into a sown field; and those who so zealously laboured to sow the seed and to free it from tares were the despised and distrusted Catholic clergy of the Polish race.

CHAPTER VI

THE ORIENTAL RITE

THIS is a question on which the Russians are perhaps ultrasensitive, and therefore it is difficult for them to judge it dispassionately.

In practice the " Oriental Rite " means the use of Greco-Slavonic Liturgy and the Eastern Canon Law preserved for Russian Catholics—in a word, Russian priests and the Eastern Liturgy for the Catholic Church in Russia.

At present Russian Catholics are divided into two camps: firstly, those who prefer the Latin Rite; secondly, those who follow the ancient Oriental use.

The first party, which " belongs to all things old," as Prince Kantemir, a Russian poet of the eighteenth century, puts it, clings to the Latin Rite, following the heroic traditions of their predecessors who used to brave Imperial wrath for " embracing the Romish Faith." For such there is more, infinitely more appeal in the Latin Mass than in the Oriental Liturgy. These converts wish entirely to break with their former religious associations when they become Catholics. Hence their shrinking from the old ceremonies, the old rites, which though altered in principle, have not changed exteriorly. It is the

same old " Pravoslavie " Orthodoxy, with its painful and disagreeable memories of the Holy Synod and its laicised organisation. To such Russians the Oriental Rite may be full of none too pleasant reminders which, if possible, had better be avoided. Why, then, should it be forced upon them ?

But there is the second party of Russian Catholics to be taken into consideration, which includes the Oriental Catholics properly so called, and for their benefit this rite must be spread throughout Russia. But even though this party may comprise a very large number of Russian Catholics, still, as I have shown, it does not represent the entire Church in the land, and, therefore, it would be rather rash to talk of a complete abandonment of the Latin Rite in Russia.

In a paper which appeared a few months ago, *Assurons aux Russes des prêtres catholiques russes*, the Rev. M. d'Herbigny, S.J., emphasises the fact that for the future welfare of the Catholic Church in Russia Russian-born priests are necessary. This is partially true. But this problem cannot as yet be studied judicially by foreigners. To find its true solution, if it can be found, one must go to Russia and examine the situation on the spot.

I do not wish to take sides as to the alternative solutions in these pages. Time will show the best way for the Russians to follow. I am simply endeavouring to point out the evident advantages of both rites for different types of Russians.

Many people urge that the number of Polish priests was already quite inadequate to cope with the needs of their own flocks, and therefore they could not possibly be expected to minister to Russian Catholics as well. Hence it must be admitted that the ultimate aim of those who love Catholicism should be to fill the ranks of the clergy in Russia with as many native-born priests as possible, ready to carry on apostolic work in their own land, and these men would naturally be of the Oriental Rite.

But it is of no use closing one's eyes to the fact that at the present time very little can be accomplished by Russian clergy alone. Whilst making all possible allowances for their unquestionable zeal and fervour, the fact should not be forgotten that they are all of them converts, mostly of very recent date, and consequently want considerable training. On the other hand, it is equally true that none but a convert can so well understand the needs of other converts.

An attempt towards finding a practical solution of this problem for the immediate benefit of Russian converts has been made within the last three years by Archbishop Cieplak. His own opinion is that it would be better for some time to come to have the so-called "Bi-ritus"* introduced into Catholic practice in Russia. Accordingly, Mgr. Cieplak

* The double rite.

authorised two Latin priests to celebrate in both rites. These two priests were the Rev. Edward Juniewicz, lately of St Stanislas', Petrograd, and the Rev. Anthony Niemanzewiecz, formerly rector of the Kolpino parish, whose vigorous efforts to improve the morals of his young parishioners landed him later in prison. Naturally, these men were not called upon to use the Oriental Rite either in Petrograd or in Moscow, as in both of these cities there were already parishes of the Oriental Rite, but this special provision was made with the idea of their being sent to provincial areas, where, of course, the episcopal authorisation would be invaluable. The idea of the " Double Rite " was, indeed, favourably looked upon among the educated classes of Russian Catholics, but there are practical difficulties connected with its introduction. One of these is the necessity of an extensive knowledge of both Latin and Oriental Liturgies, the study of which involves additional hard work, too heavy a burden for most of the clergy. The above-mentioned priests were deeply versed in liturgical matters, but one cannot expect the average priest to reach this high standard.

The Double Rite may work, but only as a temporary measure. Indeed, the number of the priests of the Oriental Rite has considerably increased since 1917. At the present time there is a big Oriental parish in Petrograd on that side of the Barmaleeva, and there are two others in Moscow and Saratoff.

The parish in Petrograd is under the supervision of Mgr. Leonid Fiodoroff, to whose energetic and incessant efforts the Oriental Catholics owe much, if not everything, of their vigorous religious life in Russia. Besides the Barmaleeva clergy, there are also two Oriental priests at St Catherine's, Fr. Alexis Zertchaninoff and Fr. J. Deibner, who celebrate the Oriental Liturgy on the Latin altars.

Father Zertchaninoff was ordained in the Russian State Church. He had been refused permission by the Imperial Government to open a public chapel for the Catholic Oriental Rite in Petrograd. Fr. J. Deibner had previously been in the Government service. He, alone of all the converts, had received permission from the Tzarist Government to celebrate the Catholic Liturgy in his own chapel; but this permission was cancelled in 1913 by an order of the Holy Synod. From that time on Fr. Deibner became attached to St Catherine's, where he was very popular among the Russians as well as among Poles and Lithuanians. Fr. Deibner was ordained at Lemberg, Galicia, but he could not make his conversion public until the year 1905 when the Decree of the Liberty of Conscience was issued. He then opened his little chapel in Petrograd and began to group his faithful around him. After his chapel had been closed, he went abroad wishing to pursue further his theological studies, but he was

prevented from carrying out his plan owing to bad health, and he returned to Russia early in the spring of 1914, and there he has remained ever since, incessantly working among the converts of Petrograd.

In Moscow the Oriental Catholics, fewer in number than in Petrograd, were grouped around the Rev. W. Abrikosoff, himself a convert of some years' standing. His too evident apostolic activity soon brought upon him the unwelcome attention of the Soviet authorities, which resulted in his arrest and subsequent exile in 1922. He and his parishioners spared no efforts to create a centre of Catholic life in Moscow, especially among the University people. A few prominent University men soon rallied round him, helping to carry on the work among the poorer population of Moscow. This parish lay under the direct jurisdiction of Mgr. Leonid Fiodoroff. At the present time it is in the hands of Fr. Nicholas Alexandroff, a Russian convert. The work in Moscow was specially dangerous because of the present political importance of the city.

Another centre of Oriental Catholic life in Russia is Saratoff, on the Volga, which has hitherto been under the supervision of Russian convert priests. Unfortunately, I cannot give any definite data with regard to the latter, as no recent information is forthcoming. That Catholic life in this town and its suburbs has been more or less intense can be gathered

from letters written by latter-day converts. To quote from one of these letters received early in 1923: " It is wonderful what the Church here has been able to achieve in the short period since the Revolution. Saratoff and the outlying districts were almost unacquainted with Catholicism: it was something like a Polish-German property in the eyes of the Russian peasantry. All this is changed now. The Church is full, and the congregation are mostly non-Catholics. It is not too soon to say that the Russian peasant folk are gradually losing their old ideas of the ' Polish-German faith.' "

The foremost of the Russian Catholic clergy to-day is Mgr. Leonid Fiodoroff. He was originally a student at the Imperial Theological Orthodox Academy of Petrograd. He intended to complete his course of theological reading at that Institute and to be ordained shortly afterwards. But his careful studies in Eastern patrology led him to adopt views quite incompatible with those of the Russian State Church. He began to have doubts as to the legitimate position of a Church which was wholly dependent on the secular power. A careful and diligent reading of Soloviev completed the work. Mgr. Fiodoroff's decision, at first but vague, not to say wavering, was finally confirmed. He left the Academy without finishing his studies, and went to Rome. Then, in an interview, he asked Pius X's advice as to what was the best course for him to

pursue in order to carry on Christ's work in his country. Pius X sent him to the Pontifical Seminary at Anagni. Mgr. Fiodoroff, having finished his theological reading there, went to Constantinople and there was ordained by an Oriental prelate. From Turkey the newly ordained priest went to Lemberg. It was there that he revived the old community of the Studites' Order, under the direction and with the sanction of Mgr. Szeptisky, the Archbishop or Metropolitan of the Catholic Ruthenians. It was a life full of austerities, both voluntary and those prescribed by the rule; it consisted mainly of penance, work and prayer. At Lemberg Mgr. Leonid had no other Russian converts with him. Later on, at the Theological Congress at Velehgrad, in Moravia, Mgr. Fiodoroff distinguished himself by his erudition and learning, which aroused the admiration of his audience.

During the war his position became difficult, as, being a convert, he had no right to return to Russia, but his patriotic heart simply burned with the desire to help his fellow-countrymen. His protector and friend, Mgr. Szeptisky, was arrested at Lemberg soon after the beginning of the war, by the order of Count Bobrinsky. The mandate for his release only came after the Revolution with a personal letter from Prince Lvoff, who was then at the head of the Provisional Government. Mgr. Szeptisky went to Petrograd, but before leaving Lemberg he con-

ferred the right of episcopal jurisdiction on Mgr. Fiodoroff.

It was in the early spring of 1918 that Mgr. Fiodoroff left Galicia and returned to Russia. He first passed through Kieff and Moscow, and was given an enthusiastic welcome by Polish and Russian Catholics in both places. But his ultimate destination was Petrograd, which city he duly reached in the summer of 1918. Travelling in Russia at that time was more than risky; it was fraught with danger, and once or twice he only escaped death by a hair-breadth. These dangers, however, did not prevent him from at last arriving in Petrograd, and organising a parish there.

Fr. Deibner, who was then in charge of a small Oriental chapel in Petrograd, handed it over to Mgr. Leonid, and in a comparatively short time, thanks to the latter's energy and to the spontaneous help received from the Latin clergy of Petrograd, this little parish became a centre of great spiritual activity. Himself an untiring and incessant worker, Mgr. Leonid encouraged others to work also. He took a leading part in the life of the other Catholic churches of both Petrograd and Moscow, which he visited from time to time. He was very popular and much beloved by his parishioners. His lectures at St Catherine's were greatly appreciated on account of his profound erudition combined with the utmost modesty.

In 1920 some of his women parishioners asked him to give them a definite rule of life, as they wished, without entering the religious state in its entirety, to withdraw to a certain extent from the world. The result of this request was the foundation of a little community near the Barmaleeva Church. The original members of this community were four highly educated women. They led a strictly religious life, mixing as little as possible with the outside world, and spending most of their time in prayer and intercession for Russia. One of the practical tasks undertaken by them was the translation of certain Catholic books of devotion into the Russian language. The rule followed by these ladies was that of St Ignatius. The same kind of community was formed in Moscow in the parish of the Rev. W. Abrikosoff.

The priests already mentioned form at the present time the nucleus of the Russian Catholic clergy, with the exception of those received into the Church since the Revolution, and the number of these is rapidly increasing. The greater part of these conversions occurred in Petrograd during 1922. Most of them were *hieromonachi*—priest-monks—in the Orthodox Church, from the Alexander Nevsky Monastery of Petrograd. Of course, these monks were received into the Church as priests, since the Orthodox orders are valid. In 1922 two of them were left in Petrograd to attend to the needs of the Russian converts, but the rest were sent into the

provinces, where the lack of clergy is more sharply felt than in Petrograd.

These monks were almost the first Russian Orthodox priests to make public profession of faith in the Roman Church. Individually their cases were very simple, for each had come to the firm conviction of the necessity of a strong centre of unity in the Church, and they were conscious of not finding it in their own communion. Their reasoning was very downright. Let me give one instance. An aged monk came to St Catherine's and merely said: "Christ has said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his true Church. We have witnessed how they have prevailed and are still prevailing against the Church that we were born in. But Christ's Church must exist somewhere on earth. Will you help us to try and find it? We feel sure that it is yours." These priests were placed for a short time under instruction and then received into the Church by Mgr. Leonid Fiodoroff.

Such cases of priestly conversions have almost no precedents in Russian Catholic history. There were cases in the past when young students at the seminaries secretly professed their allegiance to the Holy See, in the simplicity of their hearts supposing that to be enough. Naturally, one cannot help wishing that public professions of Orthodox clergy may increase in number, since priests of this description are best adapted to understand rightly

the spiritual needs of Russians, and their work, which, properly speaking, began after 1917, has already yielded brilliant results. It is to be hoped that these active centres of Russo-Catholic life will not be utterly swept away by the present storm.

CHAPTER VII

CATHOLICS AND THE RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES

LONG before the Revolution the students of the Petrograd and Moscow Universities became interested in Catholicism. This interest was generally an impersonal one, and the students had very scanty means of becoming more intimately acquainted with the subject.

The question of creed was of comparatively small importance in the Russian High Schools. Naturally, any one had a better chance of admission to the High Schools if he belonged to the State religion. Then the students, even those of the Natural Science and Mathematical Faculties, were supposed to go through a general course of theology, which was considered a mere formality both by authorities and by students; but theology and even ecclesiology were not taught in the Russian Universities.

In order to get a proper theological equipment students had to enter the Imperial Theological Academy, and this meant taking Holy Orders; but the laity were not supposed to study theology. For Catholics, too, there was another Academy at Petrograd. Nevertheless, the students' interest in theological matters noticeably increased some ten years ago for the following reason:

There was then a group of young people at the Petrograd University who suddenly became much interested in the English Tractarian Movement. Probably the cause of this interest lay in the attraction which the Anglican Church presented at that time to many Russians, not wholly indifferent to matters of religion. It was during 1912 and 1913 that many lectures on this subject were given at the House of the Holy Synod by Anglican clergy who had come to Russia for that purpose. The question of reunion between the two Churches was then discussed everywhere, the Universities included. The group of young people already mentioned turned to the literature on the Tractarian Movement, and as they were all well acquainted with English, they could read this in the original. Pusey and Keble led them to Newman, but the latter did not provoke further researches into the history of the Church of England; hence they returned to the Fathers.

Nevertheless this group achieved practically nothing on the spot. They were talked about for a while, nicknamed "erratic divines," but soon forgotten. Hence no one knew that, on finishing their University studies at St Petersburg, they went abroad and there followed their studies to their logical conclusion—*i.e.*, by joining the Catholic Church. They could, of course, never return to Russia, and therefore remained in France. Though they disappeared unnoticed, they may rightly be called the pioneers

of ecclesiological research in the Russian Universities, and their example was unconsciously followed by a greater number of students after the Revolution of 1917.

The heading of this chapter, " Catholics and the Russian Universities," may indeed sound paradoxical: most people think of Russian students as avowed atheists or nihilists. What can such as these have to do with Catholicism ?

Everything and everybody in Russia have undergone radical changes since 1917. As an ancient Russian chronicler mournfully describes his country after the Tartar invasion: " And behold, not a stem of the grass on the fields but was changed and drooped for sadness and desolation," so is it now with Russia after the events of November, 1917, which in some respects are infinitely worse than the Tartar invasion. The Tartars were only eager to slay men's bodies, whilst our tyrants of to-day are past-masters in devising diabolical means for the murder of their souls.

This spirit of anti-Christ pervading the country brought about a strong reaction towards religion among the Russian students. It was at first a mere vague, undefined yearning for things which elevate, purify, and enlighten the mind. Students grew tired of the beating of terrorist drums and of communistic theories and proletarian educational schemes. Hence a yearning for things spiritual arose, ripening into a revolt against materialism which drove some back towards their own faith, hitherto almost completely

neglected and ignored. Thus began the Petrograd Institute of Eastern Theology. Other students turned first to patristic researches and then to Catholicism, a brave thing to do in the circumstances, for it sometimes meant witnessing at the risk of their lives to the Faith. These cases were few, but they counted.

These students brought into the course of their historic studies an intense longing to know more and more of the Catholic Church. They successfully tried to organise more or less regular theological and liturgical studies. They put in order the little Patristic Library at the University and used it to the full. They wrote many valuable papers on different ecclesiological questions, and, in general, used all the means at their disposal to excite in their colleagues a similar interest. Of course, they could not achieve much of practical consequence; for they were carefully excluded from any active part in University life; they were not admitted to the Faculty Committees, and even at the meetings would be refused the right of voting for no other reason than their too evident attachment " to religious fallacies." They formed too small a part of the University to effect anything of importance, but they held their ground until 1922, when most of them were arrested for " having meddled in too conspicuous a way with Church affairs which had nothing to do with them."*

* From the Soviet warrant for their arrest.

Most of these young people were senior students, who were all denied their degrees on completing their studies for the following reason: " For not furthering the glorious Red Cause in any way, and for having ventured to ' infest ' the healthy atmosphere of the Red University of Petrograd with the ' obnoxious ' prejudices of religious morality." But thanks to the efforts of this group the present history students of Petrograd enjoy an unusually extensive knowledge of Latin, which is no small help to them in their mediæval researches. In Petrograd most of the students, even those who had no particular " Roman " leanings, were faithful attendants at the St Catherine's lectures, often taking active part in the discussions. The Catholics, in spite of oft-repeated warnings and prohibitions of the University Communist authorities, were frequent and eager contributors to them. Two-thirds of the Orthodox Theological Institute were University students who became active members of their parochial committees in spite of the severe prohibitions of the Soviets. During the winter term of 1920-21, out of ten students who attended a special course of Western Liturgies at the Petrograd University, four Christian girls were received into the Church, and one Jewish girl was first baptised into the Orthodox Church, and later made her profession of faith in the Catholic Church.

Similar cases were recorded from Moscow and

Saratoff. In Moscow a very gifted female graduate in philology became one of the most fervent members of the Abrikosoff parish. In Moscow University some of the young people went so far as to desire to consecrate themselves to the service of God in the religious state.

Although we must not regard such slight evidence as proof of any considerable Catholic advance at the Russian Universities, these are nevertheless bright spots on the dark background of Communist disbelief and blasphemy. The cases are indeed few in number, but it should not be forgotten that they are quite unprecedented in Russia.

The Catholics in Petrograd and Moscow do not stand aloof from University life, although their position becomes more and more difficult with every new term. Specialising in subjects of Church History was expressly forbidden. Those who, nevertheless, preferred " to stick to fallacies unworthy of good citizens "—to quote a " comrade " addressing one of the Faculty meetings—were refused the standard monthly allowance of food and money, and practically denied the possibility of continuing their studies; for some of them it meant starvation. To think of taking a degree in Church History was out of the question. The General Church History examinations were prohibited as early as 1920, and replaced by an examination on the History of Universal Religions in which Christianity held the last place,

but even this practice was soon dropped, and any religious denomination became a *res prohibita.*

In such conditions all interest in these matters seemed likely to die out, but, on the contrary, the number of students who became engrossed in " prohibited questions " increased with every new term. Russian Catholics, however, cannot as yet found any Catholic Theological School. Though the Russian Church was enabled some three years ago to open an Academy of Eastern theology, the Catholics' means were far too slender.

The Roman Catholic Imperial Academy of Petrograd has been closed since 1917. Its premises have for the last four years been occupied by the " Esthonian University for Proletarian Science." Furthermore, even had it been open, no work could be done there owing to the fact that most of the Professors, being Poles, were repatriated. Since 1917 all schemes of founding another Academy had to be abandoned on account of the absolute lack of funds and the impending Government persecutions.

Thus the problem of Catholic education remained unsolved, whilst there were a few young Russian converts zealous to get their sacerdotal training, and no provision could be made for them. A few steps towards a partial solution of this difficult question were made in the autumn of 1921, when a kind of theological seminary was inaugurated. Nine young converts immediately entered it. Naturally, it was

kept secret, since all religious instruction, whether public or private, was strictly forbidden by the Government. This seminary was opened on the episcopal premises. The students used to have their regular lectures in the evenings; they all lived in, but, owing to present economic conditions, they were obliged to go on with their bread-winning occupations during the day. Some of these students had had a few years of private tuition, and these were to be ready for ordination in a short time. All of them were received into the Church according to the Latin Rite; two of them were Poles, the rest Russians. Two other young converts, Oriental Catholics, were studying theology under direct supervision of Mgr. Leonid Fiodoroff.

Needless to say, no really effectual steps towards a final solution of this educational problem could have been taken during the last four years. Any open theological studies at the Universities would have been immediately labelled as " obnoxious religious propaganda " and treated accordingly. At the same time no private regular studies could be conducted without the imminent peril of incurring the penalty on the part of the Government, which had laid an express veto on all such enterprises.

And yet, notwithstanding all these difficulties and obstacles, sometimes really insurmountable, the knowledge of and the love for Catholic history and doctrine has deeply penetrated into the Universities of Petrograd and Moscow.

CHAPTER VIII

CATHOLICS AND THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT

THE Soviet Government did not begin to show hostility towards the various religious denominations from the very beginning of their rule. They waited and moved with caution; their prosecutions of religion gradually grew in violence. The Bolsheviks at the very beginning had proudly declared to the whole world their determination to respect liberty of conscience in Russia; but this was nothing but a convenient pose which they dropped at the earliest opportunity, and now one of their leaders, Bukharin, says: " It is the task of the communistic party to impress firmly upon the minds of the workers, even upon the most backward, that religion in the past and to-day is one of the most powerful means at the disposal of oppressors for the maintenance of inequality and the exploitation of slavish obedience on behalf of the toilers. Religion and Communism are incompatible both theoretically and practically."*

The first religious prosecutions were directed against the Russian State Church. It should be borne in mind that, when the Bolsheviks came into power, they had no mere Holy Synod Church to

* See his article in the *Pravda*, April, 1923.

deal with, a Church secularised to the utmost and subservient to the ruler's will and whim. Instead of this Erastian Church the Bolsheviks had to face a strong religious body, united under one Patriarch, and strong in the newly won sympathies of the masses. The Soviets realised that they would hardly be able to cope with this vigorous institution, consequently they began to use, though with the utmost caution, all the weapons at their disposal for creating interior divisions in the Russian Church. They were fairly successful in bringing about numerous rifts within the Church, and it was no difficult task to dictate their own terms to a divided communion. One part of the Orthodox clergy bowed down under the Soviet yoke, and hence arose the living Red Church, which later was subdivided into two new Churches. The remainder who could not reconcile either their own principles or the Church's teaching with communistic theories paid the penalty in Soviet dungeons, and their records are not as yet brought to light. But, anyhow, the Soviets got what they wanted from the Orthodox. They rendered them impotent to put any obstacles in the " Red Way."

Next came the turn of the Catholics. As one of the Soviet leaders has put it, they were conscious, and rather uncomfortably conscious, that this " enemy " was of a vastly " different mettle." But even against the Catholic Church they proceeded cautiously and prudently, mainly from political reasons. They were

not sure of the issue on the Polish front, and they regarded the Roman Church somewhat in the same way as Polish property. They have changed this point of view since, for now they do not scruple to defy the whole civilised world.

The first open hostilities to Catholics began at Easter, 1919, when several Red Guards made a violent intrusion into some of the Catholic churches of Petrograd and Moscow, interrupted the Mass, and literally dragged the clergy in their vestments from the altars into the Cheka. The few people who attempted to intervene were immediately arrested, but soon released, and the whole thing was carefully hushed up by the Bolsheviks. However, this incident had so aroused religious feeling that the authorities thought it prudent through the Soviet press to attribute the occurrences to an outburst of Russian patriotism—the period was one of severest fighting between Russia and Poland—and any official "egging on" was disclaimed. And yet, three years later, when the Catholic clergy were called on for trial, this incident was brought against them as the first instance of their "exciting the people to rebellion against the Soviets," though it was largely the people themselves who had taken the initiative of defending the sanctuary threatened with profanation by the Red Guards.

The real trend of the Soviet religious policy, especially towards the Catholics, grew plainer in the

winter of 1919, when the question began to be discussed at their "agitation meetings." At one of these a Communist speaker openly declared that "at the beginning of our rule we had two formidable enemies to deal with: one was the Tzar, whom we have since rendered impotent to harm our cause; and the other is the Roman Catholic Church, headed by a Pope in Rome who is the avowed enemy of all liberty and equality."

One of the first prohibitory measures was the decree which laid a veto on all kind of religious instruction whether private or public. The Catholic clergy, whom it concerned most, had but one answer to give to this decree, and they did not hesitate to give it from the pulpits: "We hold our authority to teach from our Lord Jesus Christ and not from any temporal power. If our Master were to issue such a decree, our first duty would be to render him prompt obedience; but we cannot neglect our duties, much less discontinue them at the bidding of any temporal power." Naturally, this answer was later imputed to them as criminal incitement of the parishioners towards disobeying *all* decrees of the Soviets. Nevertheless, this decree caused the clergy to suspend public instruction for a time, as it was considered best to act with utmost prudence, but they never stopped instructing children in private. This, too, was reported later, and alleged as a State crime.

One of the Soviet's next blows was to forbid

the Monday lectures in Petrograd. The Communists could not very well forbid them as meetings, since such a measure would appear to encroach upon the liberties granted by themselves; but the local Soviet used to suspend them for a time under various pretexts, as they sometimes wanted the hall for themselves. All these prohibitions, however, were temporary until the spring of 1923, when the lectures were finally forbidden.

But the real trouble began in 1922. Till then, occasional individual arrests of the clergy took place, and the Government's attitude towards the Church was more or less menacing, but no systematic onslaught was directed against Catholics as such.

In December, 1922, all the Catholic Churches in Petrograd and Moscow were closed by the authorities, and the clergy with but few exceptions found themselves summoned for trial before the High Revolutionary Tribunal. The causes leading to that trial were numerous and rather tangled. Furthermore, the grievances against the clergy were mostly of some four years' standing. The two main causes were these: (1) the Church Property Agreement; (2) Religious Education. The general charge was simply rebellion and unwillingness to submit to the Government, and attempting to stir up rebellion among their parishioners; in short, anti-government propaganda.

Previous to these proceedings, the ransacking of the Catholic churches throughout Russia took place.

It happened in the summer of 1922. There were incidents connected with these " sequestrations of church plate " which the Soviets would not care to bring to light. These " sequestrations " brought in reality very scanty material results. The chief object held in view by the authorities was to inflict the greatest possible humiliation on the faithful. In most cases these raids were accompanied by wild outbursts of most abject and vulgar profanation hardly ever checked by the higher officials who were invariably present at such proceedings.

I am able to record a few incidents which show the extent of hatred and fear that the Bolsheviks feel towards the Catholic Church. In a little suburban church, the Red hooligans asked the priest, a very aged man, to give up the keys of the Tabernacle, which, as they thought, " held the greatest treasure of the Catholics." The old priest did not answer, but went up to the altar and began to pray before the sanctuary. He knew himself to be helpless, as the Reds had chosen the middle of the night to make their church raid, so that no one might be called to his aid. Nor would aid have been of use, as the Reds had had express orders to shoot down all and any who resisted. Seeing that the old priest was not likely to give them the keys required, the brigands knocked him down, and while he was rolling on the ground, they sent for a locksmith, broke open the Tabernacle, threw the Host on the floor, trampled it

under their feet, and left the church, swearing loudly because the stolen chalice proved to be of no great monetary value. The old priest did not long survive the shock, for a few hours afterwards he was found lying dead at the altar steps.

Another instance took place in the summer of 1922 at St Catherine's in Petrograd, the last church to suffer from the sequestration, because of its immense popularity. Finally came the sequestration day appointed by the local Soviet, who politely said that they would come in the afternoon, as they were aware that there were services going on in the morning, and they would not like " to disturb them."

As a matter of fact, they turned up a little after 11 a.m., when the last Mass was not yet finished. There was no other priest on the premises except the celebrant, and they were consequently told by the sacristan to wait, as they were not authorised to start proceedings without at least one priest being present. So the Red gentlemen waited in the vestry, grumbling at the delay as they stood in their red high-peaked caps. When Mass was over, the priest came out into the vestry and quietly unvested himself, washed his hands, said his prayers, and appeared to ignore their presence.

Then their patience forsook them, and they roughly demanded the vestry keys. Their next request was to " have the people cleared out of the church." The priest ignored the first request, and

to the second he replied: " I am a priest and not a policeman; my business is to make people come into God's churches, not to ask them to leave." They shrugged their shoulders and set themselves to drive the people out of church. It happened to be a Thursday, and the congregation mostly consisted of young women and girls, members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, who had their weekly Mass on that day. They all came into the vestry before leaving the church, and asked if they should go and leave the priest alone and unaided now that trouble was coming on. He smiled and waved his hand towards the High Altar: " You need not be afraid. God will shield his own." The Reds heard these words and inferred that the counter-revolution was lurking everywhere in Catholic churches and that there must be forces hidden behind the altar.

So the women left the church, but they all remained standing in the yard outside, most of them weeping. A few people who had an official right to be present, as members of the parochial committee, remained in the vestry. The priest stood motionless and silent. He never said a word to the Reds after his first dignified rejoinder. Having cleared the church and locked it from the inside, the Soviet emissaries returned to the vestry, and again requested the priest to deliver the keys to them. Still no response came.

Then the sacristan found the keys and put them on a table. They seized them eagerly, and the

pillaging duly began. They did not find much, and only took about £15 worth of silver, mostly in chalices. They also took a beautiful monstrance, deposited at St Catherine's, which was not the parish property. One of the members of the parochial committee intervened, volunteering to give written evidence of the truth of his statement, but no attention was paid to him. Having thoroughly examined every nook and corner of the vestry they demanded pen and ink, and were already on the point of drawing up the protocol* when a member of their party, who had been a Catholic before he turned Communist, stopped them.

"Comrades," he said, "we have not finished. These people always keep their most precious chalice, often studded with gems, in a cupboard on the altar; but it is generally locked, for fear of being robbed. The priests keep it so to deceive people and to conceal their avarice. They say they keep their God there, and make people genuflect to him, but it matters little whether they have their God or our devil there, if the chalice is worth having."

Then the leader again asked the priest: "Now will you give us the key?" The Father was silent. "Comrades, let us fetch a locksmith and have it broken open," cried another. And then the priest stepped slowly back and barred with his body the

* The Soviets love red-tape, so far as their limited education permits them to use it, in formal proceedings.

little door which led from the vestry into the Church. In calm, dignified tones he spoke to his parishioners: "Children, let us go and pray, we will not see our sanctuary profaned. If need be, we can lay our bodies on the altar steps." And the little group resolutely moved towards the altar door.

The comrades laughed uneasily, and stopped them. "Citizens, *we* are not going to start bloodshed, Keep what you like. Only we shall have to put it into the protocol," which they did; but the priest's words to his flock were taken to mean: "Let us go and die fighting on the altar steps."

Similar scenes happened all over Russia. The Bolsheviks may have had some material excuse for ransacking the Orthodox churches, as these contained treasures, but they had none with the Catholic churches. And they seemed to realise it themselves, as later on they said they were only trying to pick quarrels with the clergy and laity.

The sequestration of Church plate was over; the question of Church property, both movable and immovable, remained. This was a thorny matter for both sides, and the Soviets began to tackle it in a most offensive way. They first tried to have it decided without any intervention of the clergy. Substantially, all the parochial committees were to sign an agreement by which the administration of the parochial property was to be taken altogether out of the hands of the local clergy and handed over to a

lay-committee supervised by a local Soviet. The parishioners were called upon to sign this agreement without delay, as the Soviets said that this measure only tended for their own ultimate good, "since it liberated them from the clerical yoke." At first mild means were used. People were reasoned with and shown the evident advantages of the new order of things, but it would not work. The bewildered parishioners turned to the clergy for advice, in spite of the severe admonitions and prohibitions of the Soviets. The clergy had, indeed, but one answer to give: "Wait till Rome decides the matter; we cannot do it." So the people waited, not wishing to sign the agreement.

This became irksome to the Soviets. In July, 1922, they started organising parochial meetings in order to bring the question to a quicker decision, but there was the same result. The parochial representatives would not swerve in their resolution "to await the decision of Rome." The Soviets' patience gave way at last. They declared "adherence to Rome was treason in disguise," and threatened to close all the churches, unless their request was promptly complied with. But the parishioners' attitude was unaltered. It ended in the closing of all the churches in December, 1922. For two or three months afterwards the services were conducted in private, but soon even this had to be suspended for fear of penalties, and in Lent, 1923,

all the clergy of Petrograd and Moscow were brought to trial.

The charges against them were numerous. The following is a condensed summary of them: " The clergy concerned exploited in a shameless and vulgar way the base religious superstitions of the Catholic population of Petrograd and Moscow, and used all the means in their power to win over the most ignorant among the Russian Orthodox; they used for propaganda their pulpits and private meetings, inciting to non-execution of the decrees of the Soviets as to the nationalisation and conservation as well as utilisation of all ecclesiastical property, the registration of births, deaths, and marriages, etc. They also brought elements of political propaganda into their activity by their constant appeals to Rome and Poland, though these appeals were always made under sham ecclesiastical pretexts. They were found guilty of having justified these and many other criminal acts by reference to the canonical laws of the Roman Catholic Church, and of having knowingly given a false interpretation of certain legislative acts of the Government; of having worked upon the religious conscience of the faithful in a way liable to provoke an attitude hostile to the Soviet power which led to troubles with the parishioners of the Petrograd and Moscow churches upon the conclusion of agreements relating to the use of church property, to the non-execution of the proposals of the Government

authorities concerning the ways of its use, and also to an almost general opposition to the closing of churches which occurred in Petrograd during 1922, and which was accompanied by an open disobedience of the legal authority, crimes foreseen by articles 63 and 119 of the Penal Code." This is but a short *abrégé* of the charges imputed to the Catholic clergy of Russia.

Of course, from a Soviet standpoint these charges are true. The clergy could assume no other attitude towards the Government of Lenin and Trotzky than which they had through all these years, for otherwise they would not be what they ought to be. But there is one falsehood which stands out clear to any one who has watched the situation through the last few years. None of the clergy could be accused of inciting people to rebellion against the Government. On the contrary, they made gigantic efforts to hold the people back from violence and hostility towards the Soviets whenever their parishioners' patience gave way. They constantly preached forbearance and love. Even when religious hatred and persecution began to appear among the Government leaders, their attitude remained unswerving. To quote from a letter written by one of the priests on the eve of their trial in February, 1923: "At the moment of writing, there are processions parading the streets, denouncing 'the false divinity of Christ' and burning our Lord's and our Lady's images. It

strikes me that they would not spend so much time and energy if they were not sure in their hearts of the strength and truth of Christianity. They feel it in spite of their not wishing to feel it. Hence their fury because they are conscious of being at grips with a force beyond their own strength. What can we do, you ask? We can only pray for them because they are blind and because they hate us. They expect us to hate them in return, but we cannot, and we would not if we could." Another letter, the last letter received from them: " We are to be summoned tomorrow. We are in God's hands, and so all will be well even through the darkness. It is for some better end." These last letters of men about to meet certain death are one more proof " that our faith is not vain, and our hope also is not vain."

What conclusion should be drawn from all this? What have the Soviets achieved by torturing and persecuting clergy and laity who chose to remain loyal to their faith? They seem to have succeeded in crushing the Church in Russia. All the clergy are in prison, with their lives forfeit; all the churches are closed; the laity are cowed and frightened out of their lives by incessant torrents of blood streaming all around them. Have not the Soviets been successful?

Yet, whilst pursuing this violent policy, they seem to be blind to the fact that by these acts they are attacking something of great international importance

and that they are in danger of having the mass of religious faith throughout the world welded together in one block of solid resistance. Russia's Catholic churches were her last safeguards of morality and spiritual cleanliness. There is nothing else left to support the country. Is it likely to draw strength from the nebulous theories of Communism subversive of all that purifies, elevates and fortifies the soul and mind?

The Soviets have determined to crush the Catholic Church, and they are boasting of their apparent triumph; and yet the spirit of faith is not dead: it cannot die. It lives on. Its strength lies in the same Christlike forgiveness with which for four dreary years the clergy and laity met and braved the onslaught of the enemy. Love is stronger than hate, and will ultimately prevail.

CHAPTER IX

CATHOLICS OF RUSSIA AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH NON-CATHOLICS

THE Russian Catholics to-day have among other difficult problems set before them one which probably is all the more difficult, since its handling requires a greater amount of skill and tact—namely, their relations towards other religious denominations and communities now existent in Russia.

This problem has been practically met with in many a Catholic parish of Russia; not seldom the case was that some anti-Catholic propaganda, mostly that of the Baptists, would get the upper hand and, to all appearances, frustrate the labours of the clergy of the locality. The Petrograd Baptists even claim the honour of having an ex-Catholic priest in their ranks, and probably similar cases, if not of the clergy, yet of the laity, must have occurred elsewhere.

How many " religions " are there in Russia to-day, and what is the attitude of the Catholic Church towards them ? The first part of the question cannot be answered easily. It would be correct to say that religions in Russia at the present time may be likened to " the growth of the mushrooms after a summer rain," to use an old Russian proverb. Certainly not all of these creations of the sometimes erratic Russian

mind are really dangerous and need be taken into consideration. Some of them are but of a few days' duration, and make no impression on the popular mind. Others go further back, but only float on the surface and do not penetrate deep or far; these also are unimportant.

The biggest of all religious bodies in Russia with whom the Catholic Church must needs come oftenest into contact is the former State Church, the National Church of the people, whose position became stronger after the Revolution. The *pravoslavie* or "Orthodoxy," which officially perished in 1917 together with its chief organ of administration, the laicised Holy Synod, found its spiritual resurrection in the hearts of the people. Thus the vitally re-invigorated Russian Church continued to exist until 1921, when the cunning policy of the Government brought about rifts within the Church and thereby checked, if it could not destroy, her rapidly increasing influence on the people. These divisions greatly damaged the National Church, bringing into life the Red Communistic Church with its anti-Christian theories and practices.

The attitude of the Catholics towards this National Church of Russia, whether before its division or after it, was unaltered; it could be summed up in a few words: love, sympathy, understanding. To the Catholics, of course, she was a schismatic Church; and both sides fully realised that actual reunion could

be hardly thought of at the moment; yet they tried to live in a spirit of harmony and peace. Often the Orthodox would show how little they thought of the differences. In 1920 a Catholic priest in Petrograd, the Rev. Fr. Alexis Zertchaninoff, celebrated the golden jubilee of his sacerdotal service. In honour of this occasion a solemn Mass was sung at St Catherine's, and the Orthodox choir of the Kazan Cathedral volunteered their services for the function. Later on, in 1921, when the cloth-of-gold for banners for Corpus Christi processions was lacking in some of the Catholic parishes of Petrograd, the monks of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra offered freely the use of their own materials and would not either take them back or be paid for them. "We are brothers and we must help each other," was their answer. At the memorial service for the late Pope Benedict XV many Russian clergy were present and showed vivid sympathy. Many similar instances could be given of mutual aid.

Of course, one cannot deny that a controversial spirit crept from time to time into these relations and broke the harmony. The birth-place of these elements was the Russian Orthodox Theological Institute, where those in charge were well-meaning in their zeal, but knew next to nothing about the Catholic Church, and in their ignorance honestly imagined they were saving their country from ruin by guarding it against "Polish ruses." Outbreaks

of hostility, however, occasionally happened at the Monday lectures, but did very little harm, since they were due to misunderstandings arising from lack of knowledge. But the general trend of Catholic relations towards the Orthodox was one of common sympathy, encouragement and mutual aid. These relations were still made easier by the fact that the Government at the beginning professed to stand in an attitude of equal hostility towards both Churches.

Other religious bodies which the Catholic Church was called upon to meet were those of various sects. Their spread had much increased since 1917. There are no definite data with regard to this, but some were rumoured to be the tools of the Government. Whether this be true or not, it is a fact that the Soviet even quite recently professed freer tolerance for these Christian denominations than for any historic Churches.

The two chief sects in Petrograd are the Baptists and Methodists. They carried on their propaganda rather successfully owing to favourable material circumstances. Both these sects had continual help from America, and they were winning people over by feeding and clothing their children. They could not achieve much, if anything at all, by way of controversy, but unhappily the famine and the general economic ruin of the country were convenient weapons which they used to the utmost. They could not do much harm in the cities among the

Catholic population, but in the villages this danger was more serious owing to a complete absence of clergy. In a small place near Moscow there were four Catholic families who were registered in one of the Moscow parishes. Usually they used to come up to town for their spiritual wants. But the winter of 1921–1922 being an uncommonly severe one they all stayed at home. And it was during the same winter that a few Methodist famine relief workers who were working as a separate unit came to that place. The result was that one family out of four was persuaded to go over to them for the sake of greater material privileges, yet to the honour of Russian Catholics it must be admitted that such cases were very rare exceptions and were so severely censured by other Catholics round them that they soon ceased, in spite of the great material temptations of the situation. In Petrograd and Moscow sectarianism, though widely spread, was rendered more or less powerless by the vigilance of the clergy.

But all these, whether heretics or schismatics, were at least Christian denominations. Far harder was the task of the Catholic Church in Russia to keep their flocks against the rapidly developing danger of unbelief and atheism, spread by those who professed to be outside Christianity. This does not refer to those who were quite indifferent to all and any religions—these worked the least harm—but to all those to whom the very name of Christ is hateful,

to those whose negations are subversive of all accepted principles of morality; and their name is legion in the Russia of to-day. These, indeed, are the strongest of all, as their programme largely coincides with that of the Government. Hence they are afraid of no persecutions on the part of the latter and enjoy an unrestrained freedom, so far as freedom exists at all in Soviet Russia.

These cannot be classified. They should have one common name, that of the army of anti-Christ. And though the Government professes to hold aloof from all religious or anti-religious movements, one cannot but identify these people with the Government. The most formidable sect of all, if it can be called a sect, is that of the Satanists, who have existed in Russia before, for many a member of the Russian aristocracy joined this society for no other reason than that of " enjoying a novelty." Since 1920 they seem to have entered deeply into the life of both Petrograd and Moscow, and they are waging a merciless war against all Christians, but their weapons are turned chiefly against the Catholic Church. In most cases the Government is behind these attacks, and to repel them may involve " attacking the Government." Their means of undermining Catholic life are sometimes quite puerile and sometimes dangerously subtle.

Something more than mere human strength was required to stand in an unaltering attitude before such numerous enemies, multiplying almost daily,

and yet the few Catholics held their own. They were truly in an alien camp, but they sought and made friends everywhere. This is the witness of a zealous Baptist who often attended the Monday lectures, though he never became a convert: " The peace and quietness of these people (the Catholics) is a sure sign that God is with them."

The Catholics freely mixed with all, helping them when they asked for help, showing them by example the worth of the true Faith. The Catholic clergy happily were able to see, to discuss and to respect " the other point of view " of non-Catholics, and thus to win them over. Their attitude towards those who were outside the Faith was simple: love, forbearance, sympathy, understanding, patience. They tried by such means to persuade, avoiding all polemics and controversy.

CHAPTER X

RUSSIAN CATHOLICS AND EUROPE

THERE is little, if any, communication at the present time for Russian Catholics with their Western brethren, so that these few words are rather meant for the future than for the present.

" West," or merely " Rome," how often has this word been on the lips of Russian Catholics, and with what infinite love is it pronounced ! It was to Rome—Rome mysterious, unseen by the majority of them—that they were looking during the months of suspense; it was again to Rome that they were looking when the first peals of thunder began to be heard. " Our only hope is God, then Rome."* It is to the ever same Rome they are looking now, looking and asking for help.

The West, the Catholic West, has, or rather will have, many a way to help the new Catholic Russia, small in number, but great in faith. But before giving their help, those of the West should make an effort to understand rightly the spirit of Russia, which wants so much gentleness and tenderness after all these years of suffering, still unfinished. This spirit has been misunderstood and grossly misrepresented in the West until the present. Will not

* Letter of the Rev. P. C., March, 1923.

our common faith finally cement the understanding between East and West? The Russians pray and believe that it will.

In the near future there will be countless opportunities for the nations of the West to begin missionary work in the new Russia. Missionaries, indeed, are and have been badly needed all these years. They have been so anxiously expected by the Russians that they are sure to find the warmest welcome in hearts only too glad to be won.

Already, in 1920, there were rumours that a mission of Franciscan friars was waiting at the frontier of Austrian Poland for the amelioration of Russia's political situation. These rumours, though unjustified, were sufficient to arouse deep feelings of joy among Russian Catholics, who said: "We are not forgotten; they think of us in our distress." "They" meant for us the Holy Father and Rome.

But our "Western brothers" before they come to Russia should fully realise the character of the people among whom they have to live. To-day the world is greatly interested in them. Their history, literature, art and philosophy seem to be penetrating the West, but what does the latter know of the soul of Russia, which is gradually finding itself perhaps now for the first time after the dark years of their recent sufferings?

Russian Catholics seem to be still more unknown.

Until now they have been subjected at home to most ignominious treatment and many persecutions; abroad, their sincerity was not always trusted as it should have been. But this belongs to the past of Russian Catholicism. We must see to it that in the future these things do not occur again.

The coming years will show how and when Russia will enter the great Catholic family of the world, but her entrance will be made through " the valley of the shadow of death," the better to prepare the future triumph of the Faith. This will not be accomplished in a year or two; generations may come and go, and the Catholic Faith will be still the possession of the chosen few. It will be simply rash to build any rosy hopes on Russia becoming Catholic before our eyes, but the work is begun, and must be carried on.

Cut off as they are now from the rest of their brethren in the Faith, they keenly and vividly feel themselves to be at one with the rest of the Catholic world. When the news of Pope Benedict's death was announced throughout all the parishes of Russia, they said: " We are orphaned; we have lost our father." The poorest parishioners in Petrograd and Moscow gave up their last kopecks to procure a better frame for the portrait of the Holy Father. And a beautiful sermon was preached on this occasion by Mgr. Cieplak at St Catherine's, when the Archbishop gave a graphic outline of all that the late Pope

had done for the world in general, and for Russia in particular.

Then there was the universal joy at the election of the present Holy Father, the longing to get any scrap of foreign paper to find out all about the "Vatican." How proud they were on realising that the Pope was one of the first to help the famine in their native land! This is how most of them feel about Rome: "We are denationalised: we must needs bow our necks to the hateful Yiddish yoke, unless we prefer to be butchered, and we are without a centre. Our home, our native land, is the Church. Our King is the Pope. He is much more of a Father to us than the Tzar ever was."

How will the Catholic West look upon these new brethren in the Faith? They are maimed and bruised and wounded to the utmost, are joined in their sufferings with the martyrs of the first centuries. Many of them whose names will ever remain unknown to us, buried in the vast spaces of the Russian land, have had the supreme honour and glory of receiving the martyr's crown. Those who remain want tenderness and understanding, and beyond all they want the help of present prayer and intercession. For this they are looking to their brethren over the border. Their strength is oozing out little by little, but when it is finally exhausted it shall be death for them, and not apostasy. Their children and their children's children may enjoy a blessed tranquillity,

but they will never know it. Theirs is a time of hard and severe fighting. Do they not merit support?

Russian Catholics are now offering intercession for the rest of their fellow-countrymen either led astray or lost in complete darkness. Will not the Catholic world help them in this task, which corresponds with the wish of Pope Pius X?

Non solum approbamus, sed valde commendamus ut sacerdotes, religiosi, et singuli christifideles una simul coniuncti omnibus precibus apud Deum misericordiam contendant, ut quotquot sunt ab Ecclesia Catholica dissidentes, per divinum Eucharistiae sacramentum et sacrificium, quod est unitatis signum, vinculum caritatis et concordiae symbolum . . . ad Fidei unitatem revertantur?

Let one quote in conclusion the words of one who died for the Faith, and whose death was unknown, like that of most of them. He was a young engineer who met his fate in a small town for no other reason than opposing the Reds' profanation of the Midnight Mass at Christmas, 1921. He was badly wounded in the fray and died a few hours afterwards. His sister afterwards gave me a slip of paper on which the following words were scrawled by the dying man's hand: "It is a most honourable privilege to be allowed to die for our dear Faith. We Russians, the most backward of all, seem to have this great honour now. May God be thanked."

CHAPTER XI

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

MORE than 1,000 years ago, as says the oldest Russian legend, the little Northern tribe of Slavs sent an invitation to the Rus princes of Scandinavia, saying to them: " Our land is great and rich, but there is no order among us: come then and rule and govern us."

And the Russian legendary lore goes on to tell us that the Rus princes did instil order in the land, " and henceforth ruled they and their offspring our country, and peace and order flourished therein, and greatly pleased were our fathers that they had called those princes."

I do not think the disorder of the little Slav country in the ninth century can in any way be compared to the chaos reigning in the vast Russia of to-day. Whose turn is it now to restore to harmony and peace the Christian Russia ?

There are few Russians who would not hesitate to give but one answer to this question.

Not in vain have numberless intercessions been offered up for Russia. Not in vain have her countless unknown martyrs given their lives for the truth. Not in vain do her best children " never doubt that dawn will break " or fear that, though " right be

worsted, wrong will triumph." Though the odds still continue to be fearful, and vain seems the help of man, God's help is always near.

And when the conditions are changed, what then? A very difficult task lies before those who will carry Christ's message into that unhappy land, but the difficulties already mentioned elsewhere will be eased to a great extent by the very character of the Russians—by those features in their character which enabled their ancestors humbly to acknowledge their incompetence for ruling their country; for all the history of Russia gives striking examples of the innate humility of the nation, and true humility is the best ground for faith.

But perhaps it will be urged that it sounds rather ironical to speak of the future of Christ's Church in a country whose leaders are now waging a most desperate war against him and his ministers. It looks as if anti-Christ in Russia has all but won the day. And a little note of something like despair is creeping even into the few letters recently received from Russia.

"How can we stand? How can we hold our own against such fearful odds? Surely this is beyond our strength." This is the voice of human weakness which must now and then assert itself. It is perfectly excusable in this case. The darkness around is too dense, our forces so insignificant. The results of gigantic efforts achieved amidst such hardships

with so many prayers and vigils seem to be quite frustrated. What wonder that they are in a condition nigh to despair?

And then they feel that they are sustained. They seem to be able to pierce beyond the vista of these dreary years, of many years to come full of the same sufferings, and they see the goal.

We do not know and we dare not question why it is that Russia has to suffer most at present. We know that those madmen in Russia who hold their country in their merciless grip, who were bent on building a Godless and Christless country, have met HIM face to face, and hence their rage against his followers. They know whom they are fighting. Not against the State Church have they sent their deadliest weapons, not against the numerous sectarians, which might be just as odious in their eyes for professing some creed. No, it is the Truth they are against.

Is the sad disaster which marked the eleventh century to be remedied in the twentieth? Is it through these years of severe sufferings that the East will be reunited to the West?

It is not for us to question. Yet how dare we doubt that the tribulation now permitted is for an ultimate good? Those few remaining in Russia now offering intercessions for their country, for their tortured and tormented brothers, and praying for those who inflict these tortures, have this firm hope.

They see Russia's glory in a vision, and they know that hereafter their children shall see this vision become a reality. For what is Russia's glory if not the attainment of the only truth, so long sought for, so long shrunk from, so long feared because misunderstood? Not upon the remnants of the State Church will the Catholic Church build her future in Russia, but upon the welcome and the love of those to whom she was the only refuge in their dark hour of national sorrow. She has won the love of many already, and the prayer of all who love the Catholic Church should be that their number may increase, and that the Vision Splendid of the Russian Catholics of to-day may be realised in God's good time.

APPENDIX I

In Memoriam

MGR. CONSTANTINE BUTKEWIECZ,

SHOT IN PETROGRAD, MARCH 31, 1923.

Majorem hac dilectionem nemo habet, ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis. Scimus autem quoniam diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum.

"I remain where I am; if God calls me, I know it will be for the best, even should the call come through the Red Terror."

Mgr. Butkewiecz' words in September, 1922.

AND so on Holy Saturday of 1923 the call did come to him, and he answered it unflinchingly, remaining where he was.

One more victim of the Red Terror. . . . But this is a glorious victim.

To us who have known him and loved him, the horrible news at first came like a nightmare, unreal, monstrous, beyond comprehension. It is as yet difficult to discern the glory of martyrdom under the horror, the cruelty of the fact. We could not, or, rather, we would not, realise that this death is *ad majorem Dei gloriam*. And we do not as yet. The sense of the loss is too great.

One would like to say a few words about this man whose whole personality could be briefly summed up in one word: *Caritas*.

In those awful surroundings of hatred, of lovelessness, in which rolled on our Petrograd life, the big kindly figure of the " ksiad prelat," as we called him, was a real embodiment of love.

He had grasped, sooner than many others, what was the best policy to pursue with those who " were not of us "—prudence and gentleness—and he followed it, without swerving for a moment from Catholic principles.

Beloved and honoured by his parishioners, respected by the many non-Catholics who came into touch with him, he was known to nearly everybody in Petrograd and Moscow. His church in Petrograd, St Catherine's on the Nevsky, soon became through his energetic efforts the centre of Petrograd Catholic life. Its atmosphere of sympathy was magnetic; non-Catholics, most of them weary of outside horrors, willingly came there to rest for a while in that spirit of peace and charity which pervaded the whole place.

Mgr. Butkewiecz, with his true and deep Catholicity, had none of the narrow-mindedness of a fanatic, and he was always ready to see, to discuss and to respect " the other point " of those " outside," and his skill in handling these difficult questions won over many of them.

Sunday after Sunday at St Catherine's he preached his simple unsophisticated sermons, and the keynote of all of them was: " God is love, and it is given to us to be his true children."

In spite of his strenuous life of miscellaneous parish duties and the administration of the Catholic Petrograd Committee, at the head of which he stood, he always found time for everything, and people, whether they were Catholics or not, were invariably sure to find him ready to welcome them. He shut his door to no one, and knew how to help so that his right hand knew not what his left was doing. Notwithstanding his impaired health (latterly he suffered badly from some internal trouble), and when obliged to stay in bed, he would insist on being kept *au courant* of everything connected with his work.

The Russian Catholics in Petrograd have lost in him one of their best friends. Though a Pole to the core and a great patriot at heart, he knew how to efface his nationality, so as not to make it jar unnecessarily on Russian converts. He was first and foremost a Catholic. With touching solicitude and infinite tact he did all in his power to do away with the national "misunderstanding," always urging upon all, Poles and Russians alike, the necessity of rallying at this crucial moment round one common cause.

He went far to meet all the immediate wants of Russian converts. He inaugurated in some of the Petrograd Catholic churches sermons in Russian, and the evening services during the months of May, June and October, not only in Polish and Lithuanian, but in Russian. The Russian converts found in him

a kind adviser, always ready to help them in their difficulties, in spite of the heavy demands on his time from other quarters.

Kindness, eagerness and willingness to help, combined with the chivalrous demeanour of a perfect Christian gentleman—these are the things we shall always remember of him.

During the comparatively short time we knew him we grew to love him, and our work under him in our beloved parish of St Catherine's drew us still closer together.

Now he is no more.

As was said above, one does not as yet see the laurels of a martyr's crown, one's eyes are only riveted on the thorns. And perhaps many to whom he was so dear have asked the anguished question: "Why should he have gone—gone and left the country where the workers are scarce? Why was he not allowed to stay and continue his work?"

Yet we may live to hear the answer in the future, when the Red Terror now raging in Russia will have ceased, when the blood-stained country, now on the rack of superhuman sufferings, will rise to a greater glory and to a fuller knowledge of God's Catholic Truth, when the deaths of many martyrs unknown to us, who, like Mgr. Butkewiecz, have laid down their lives for the Faith, will have borne their fruit.

THE VERY REV. IGNATIUS CZAEVSKY

The Very Rev. Fr. Ignatius Czaevsky, Canon at St Catherine's, Petrograd, was formerly the Vicar-General of the Catholic Church in Petrograd and Moscow, and for some years previously the Catholic Dean of Moscow.

In view of his extremely bad health he was repatriated, and left Russia for Poland in the autumn of 1921. Yet the numerous exertions of mind and body, as well as the hard material privations in Russia, began to tell on him as soon as he reached his country. He fell ill from mere exhaustion, and went to rest in January, 1922, at Warsaw, barely three months after his arrival in Poland.

Until the very end he never ceased to correspond with his friends in Russia, always regretting that his weak health did not permit him to stay on and continue his apostolic work among the many Russian converts who flocked around him both in Petrograd and Moscow.

His was a striking personality in which but two things predominated—love of God and zeal for the Church. He was always brimful of enthusiasm and readiness to do any work God might call on him to accomplish. His favourite motto was a little word of St Bernard's: *Causa diligendi Deum Deus est; modus sine modo diligere.*

He was universally beloved by all who came in touch with him. One could always feel in him an immediate desire and readiness to do good to others independently of their relations to him. His failing health often prevented his taking any active part in Church functions, but, even when ill and in bed, he would never refuse to receive people who wanted to see him and, in spite of his bodily weariness, he would always listen with invariable patience to all their troubles. And he had the rare gift of saying the right word to the right person.

Fr. Czaevsky was a highly educated man, and possessed many talents. Especially he had a gift for music and languages. He read and understood at least nine languages, and could speak with equal fluency six, English being one of them.

He had travelled much and been often to England, where he stayed several times at the convent of the Holy Family at Enfield. He loved to speak of his numerous English friendships, and the few English Catholics in Petrograd were, without exception, his friends. He often longed for England and the religious freedom he found there, especially when the Bolshevist religious oppressions began to be felt. Yet, mercifully, he never lived to see the Petrograd and Moscow churches, so dear to him, profaned and closed, and he was spared witnessing the further horrors.

He was deeply versed in the Anglican question,

too, and willingly gave all the help he could to the few Church of England people in Russia who found themselves "stranded" there in 1918, when they were no more able to attend their own services.

His death was a great personal loss to all who knew him.

APPENDIX II

THE annexed sketch of the conversion of four Russian students is a little illustration to an earlier chapter. The episode narrated took place at the Petrograd University. It began in the winter of 1919, ending in the spring of 1921. All the facts are genuine, but the author is bound to suppress all names.

There were four of them in the great Northern University, and they were hopelessly carried away by what was unelegantly called the "patristical craze."

They were all expected to turn into medievalists, like the rest of the students working under the same professor, but they wanted something more than medievalism, and this was the spirit of the Middle Ages. To get it they all went so deeply into patristic researches as to astonish their somewhat scornful colleagues.

Soon their special lines were discovered, and the girls were respectively called "Beda Venerabilis," "St Gregory" and "St Leo"; the fourth girl's chief "hobby" was Liturgies, so she was nicknamed "Durandus." The girls did not seem to mind.

They spent nearly all their time in the little " Patrology Room." It was so small one could hardly move about. Its four walls were lined with book-crammed shelves. It was restful for one's eyes to look on the mellow browns and yellows of their ancient leather bindings. Only the back wall was different from the rest with the austere black of 221 volumes of Migne's " Patrologia Latina."

The spirit of these books lived in the little room. This was what helped one to concentrate one's mind on medieval ideas, medieval beliefs, medieval splendours of creative thought, enshrined in the childlike simplicity of faith.

One afternoon, having finished a hard morning's work, the four girls and a few other students sat idly talking in the little sanctum. Suddenly " St Gregory " remarked with a faintly discernible sadness in her voice: " After all is said and done, we are intruders here," and she waved her hand towards the " Patrologia."

" Why ?" sharply asked a Jew student who took a special interest in the Crusades from a purely Jewish point of view.

" Oh, we are just intruders on the edge of the Middle Ages; we are not in them."

" I catch your idea," said he, " but surely one cannot be subjective when handling historical facts."

" Do you call it subjective ? Facts and dates don't make up history. There is the spirit of every

event, however small and insignificant it may seem. And do you not see that the medieval spirit, as a whole, can be only realised when the spirit of the Church is fully entered into ?"

" Oh ! That depends on the individual."

" It does not. I know you would dearly love to lessen the universal meaning of it; still, you cannot grasp it without grasping the Church idea, and this you cannot do unless. . . ."

Here " St Gregory " stopped abruptly, feeling she could not go any further. The boy laughed as he rose to go.

" Well, Mademoiselle, are you in for some kind of propaganda ? But I am afraid you will make a sorry missionary, Mademoiselle, you are too blunt."

The University life in the great turbulent city of the North rolled on apparently without any change. And the four strange " Divines " patiently pursued their " queer " studies, sitting sometimes late into the night in the little room taking innumerable notes and going deeper and deeper into the rich forests of patristic thought.

Once " Durandus " was sitting alone in the little sanctum. It was late in the afternoon, and she was tired, but her mind was not too tired to listen, and there was much to listen to. The quaint little room was full of voices long hushed and gone from the earth, voices of those who though dead in the flesh

are yet alive eternally in the great truth they helped with their lives to reveal. The girl's soul thrilled involuntarily as she listened.

" You have come to us," said the voices, " asking for knowledge, and we have willingly given you all we could. And yet are you so blind as not to see that for which we have lived and worked and died ?"

Yet there was no response in the girl's soul. Still held under some incomprehensible spell, she listened on. Then the " Acta Sanctorum " joined in:

" Can't you understand the message we have been bringing you—the message sealed with our blood ?"

" Unity of God, Unity of Faith, Unity of Baptism, all united in one only Church "—softly came from the big folios of St Cyprian.

Something stirred in the girl's heart. She rose from her chair and went to open the window. It was restful to breathe in pure evening air, and to stand there, listening on to those voices grown so familiar so loved, so intrinsically dear. Then slowly she turned towards the dearly beloved " Patrologia."

Unity of everything through God and his Church. Unity of the Church. Where was she to look for it ? Then she drew out a volume of St Cyprian, containing his treatise " De Unitate Ecclesiæ." She then quickly knelt down and began to con the familiar pages lovingly and read on unmindful of the swiftly falling dusk. The long sought message was coming home to her. The old Saint spoke so

simply, so clearly. She not only read the printed words, she seemed to listen to his very voice alive, clear and convincing. The last glimmer of light died out. And tenderly, gently, the girl closed the book and rose from her knees.

Next day " Durandus " placed herself under the instruction of a Dominican friar, but nobody knew anything about it. She kept it hidden even from her best friends, herself unconscious of the reason of this secrecy.

Many months passed—in fact, a year and a half. Many exams. were done, many papers written on various subjects by students anxious to get their degrees. And the four " strange " girls still continued plodding in the mysterious domain of " patristics." Yet their college work was never neglected, and the Professor had no reason to complain of their " hobby."

One afternoon, when all four of them were sitting in the little room, working hard for their paleography examination, " St Gregory " remarked in a quiet voice:

" Is it not time we brought things to a head, girls ?"

None of them asked what exactly she meant; they understood. Yet " Durandus " blushed, and the other two bent over their palimpsests.

" St Gregory " went on in the same quiet voice:

" To put it crudely, we are in for it, there is no

denying the fact; but it rests with us to have it finally carried out."

They all looked into each other's eyes.

"The Fathers have called us, have they not?" softly murmured "Beda."

"Yes, they have, and we know what their appeal is. They are just as alive now as they were centuries ago."

"Shall we not respond?"

And "Durandus" joined in, bending her deeply flushed face over the book:

"We must. It is the dear God's voice speaking to us through them."

"St Gregory" raised her head.

"It is the *Dominica Palmarum* this day week," she said in a firm voice. "Let us have our response ready by then."

And the other three girls assented, each blushing deeply at the revelation of something hitherto hidden in their lives.

The *Dominica Palmarum* came. And the four met at the same altar on the same morning. Surely, the dear old Fathers must have smiled down on them as each in turn knelt before the priest to recite her profession of faith.

APPENDIX III

THE UNKNOWN CATHOLIC MARTYRS OF RUSSIA

THESE facts have come to light but recently.

It was in the summer of 1921. There was a little village near Petrograd, along the Petrograd-Viborg Railway. This village once had a Lithuanian asylum for orphans; hence there was a Catholic church in that place. Soon after the Revolution the asylum was closed, as there were no funds to keep it going, and the priest in charge of the little church had to leave. Yet a few Catholic families remained on in the village.

During the next four years the place underwent many a vicissitude, coming alternately into the hands of the Whites and the Reds. After all hostilities were over, the Reds settled there, and the village resumed more or less of its former tranquillity, but its inhabitants missed their little church.

The village was naturally brought to rack and ruin during those four disastrous years. Scarcely any houses were fit to live in, whilst the Reds had to keep a considerable garrison there in view of the situation of the village being close to the Finnish frontier. But there was no living accommodation, and at last the authorities resolved to turn both the

asylum and its church into barracks. As these buildings were barred and locked, it was decided that the doors should be forced open.

On the eve of the day appointed for the carrying out of this plan, a few Red soldiers sat in the village public house, discussing the details of its execution. They were overheard by some children—*i.e.*, three boys who happened to belong to the few Catholic families of the place. The boys were all of them big enough to remember how their mothers used to take them into the little church and teach them to genuflect before the altar, saying that " Jesus lived there." The children grasped the idea that " Jesus' house was to be insulted," as they knew well what the Red soldiers were like. The boys did not know that with the closing of the church the Blessed Sacrament had been removed. Their minds clung to the old associations, and they resolved to do all they could " to shield Jesus."

The children found out that the raid would take place in the small hours of the following morning. Accordingly, they began to watch from midnight on. They crept into the old church through a window which for some unknown reason was left half open, and overlooked the yard of one of the houses. A sister of one of the boys joined them, as she was as eager as her brother and his friends to " shield the dear, loving Jesus."

The children kept their brave watch all through the

hours of the night, crouched at the altar steps, and early in the morning the door was broken open and the Reds came in. When they saw the children, at first they gruffly told them to be off, as this was no place for them. The children remained where they were, and the Reds threatened to fire on them. The boys replied they would not suffer their dear Jesus to be insulted, and that they would remain there. The soldiers, most of them more than half tipsy, began to shoot at the children, and two of them immediately fell. Then the soldiers told the remaining boy and his sister to " clear out," but the boy's only answer was to bar the way to the altar steps with his body.

A few minutes later he was carried out of the church, bleeding but smiling. " We have shielded Jesus, they did not dare to touch him," he told his mother when they brought him home.

They shielded Jesus.

The little boy died a few hours afterwards, but he lived long enough to say that he had seen Jesus standing smiling and radiant, on the altar steps, and stretching his hands in benediction on the fallen bodies of the children who laid down their little lives to shield his Tabernacle. And the soldiers saw him, too, but they were terrified; to them he did not appear smiling, so they fled screaming that the place was haunted by the devil. And the boy died radiant, saying: " We have shielded Jesus."

APPENDIX IV

A CONVERT'S PRAYER FOR RUSSIA

FROM THE SLAVONIC

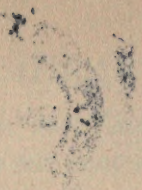
O LORD CHRIST, whose voice stilleth the tempest and whose hand stayeth the wind, we pray thee to look down in thy mercy on our beloved country, which was once holy in thy sight, and which is now become a prey to unbelief and blasphemy.

Speak thy word of peace and bid the tempest be still. And if it should be thy blessed will to prolong the ravages of this storm, in order the more to humble us for our past misdeeds, which are more numerous than sands on the sea-shore, then we thank thee from our hearts for this mercy which is more precious to us than all the pearls in our rivers.

Lord of Mercy, pardon, we beseech thee, those who in this country insult thy name and pour venom and hatred on thy love. Teach us to love them for our love of thee. And teach us to pray for those who cannot pray because they have forgotten thee.

Thou, who hast lifted up our country on thy cross, abide with us through these midnight watches, lest we wander away from thee, lest we faint and the powers of darkness overcome us. And now we

thank thee, our King, for the great joy thou hast given us in our hour of sorrow: the gift of thy faith, the knowledge that we are at one with thee through thy one Church. Gladly shall we suffer all things unto thy glory, for we know that our faith shall be our crown. Amen.



Almendinge, M.E. BQX
The catholic church in 2855
Russia today. .A6.